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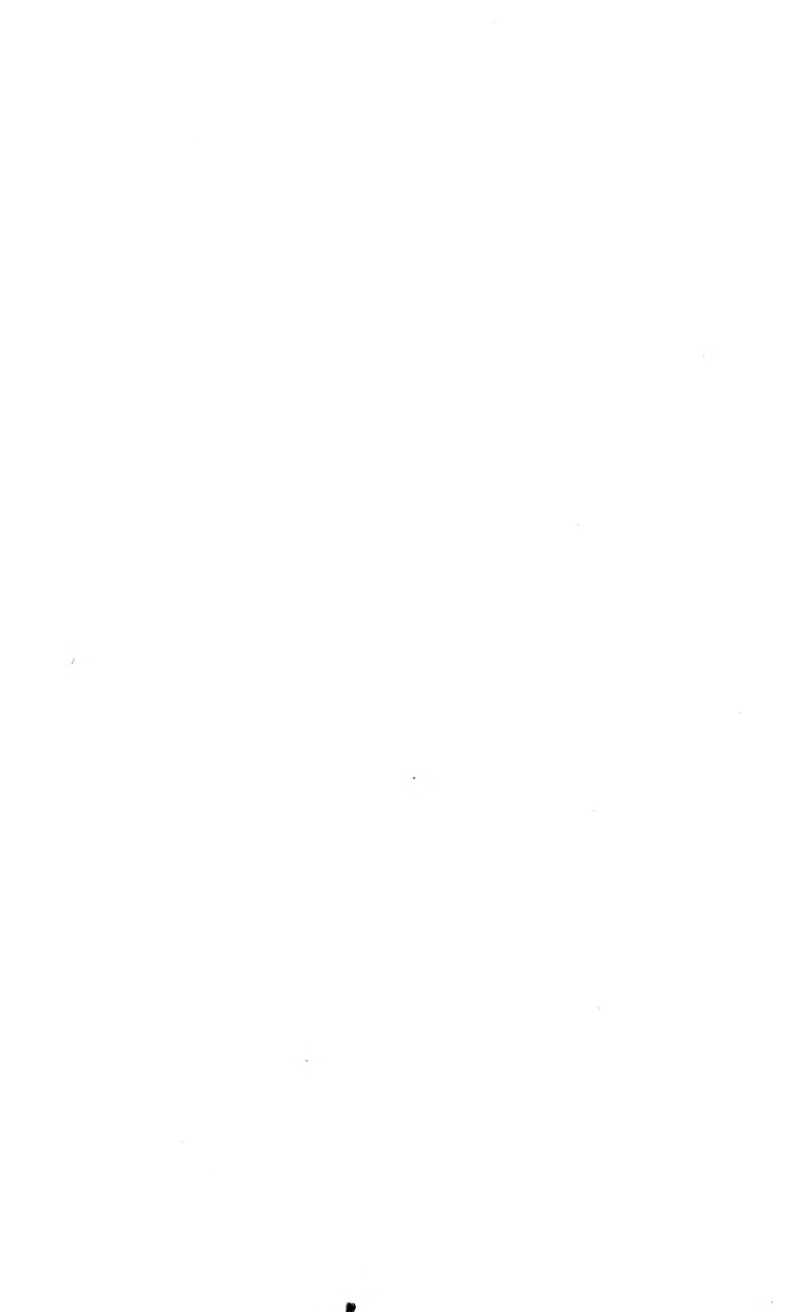
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THIS volume was left ready for the press by Dr. MANNING. It needed no alteration or revision. We give it to the world as it is, the expression of his heart-life and ripe convictions.



# NOT OF MAN BUT OF GOD

BY

REV. J. M. MANNING D.D.

AUTHOR OF "HALF TRUTHS AND THE TRUTH"  
"HELPS TO A LIFE OF PRAYER" ETC.

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# NOT OF MAN, BUT OF GOD.

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## CHAPTER I.

### ANYTHING MAY BE DOUBTED.

NOTHING can be more sure than that God has spoken to men, and that our Bible is such a record as we need of what he has said. The whole Bible is, in this view of it, the theme not only of this opening chapter, but of those which may follow it in the present volume. It is in Christ's stead, my dear friend, that I ask you to spend a little while with me in considering what the proofs are of the divine origin of Scripture.

No doubt you will be surprised to hear me say that I propose to prove that our Bible is a message to us from God, when I tell you, as I now frankly do, that my mind instinctively recoils from any such proposal. My first feeling in regard to it is that it is irreverent; that it is a profane attempt to prove what is above all proof; that it is presuming to put on trial what prophet and psalmist and apostle and our Lord Jesus Christ all assume to be true. Let me say, then, that I do not

propose to put our Bible on trial, but rather to withdraw it from the trial on which others have thoughtlessly or in their blindness put it. The truth of the Bible will be as clear to us as the sun, if we come back to the spiritual nature in us; if from that point of view we candidly look at it, and pay no attention to the intricate and bewildering arguments which men have constructed, whether for or against it. All truth has a self-evidencing power when we are set face to face with it, and candidly look at it from the right point of view. I hope to bring you to that point, and there leave you to judge for yourself, if any doubt such as is sometimes put in our way, or arises in our minds, has caused you to look with suspicion on this most blessed and divine gift, — our Bible, the book of books.

Let me repeat the words with which I began: "Nothing can be more sure than that God has spoken to men, and that our Bible is such a record as we need of what he has said." This statement may not cover all the ground which we need to go over, for God reveals himself in what he does no less than in what he says; but it will answer for a beginning. "But is not that a pretty strong statement, altogether too strong, which you make in saying that nothing else can be more sure than the Bible?" As likely as not you toss me this question on the very start; yet I take back

nothing ; I do not qualify or limit what I have said. The statement cannot be too strong. I intended to make it as strong as possible. "Nothing else can be more sure," is my assertion, and to it I mean to adhere. "What," you say, "as sure as our own existence?" Certainly. "As sure as that there are stars in the sky, and a moon, and a sun?" Certainly. "As sure as that there is a solid earth under us with cities and people and trees and animals upon it, and streams and seas with fishes in them?" Certainly. "Do you mean to say that the Bible is as surely true as it is true that two and two are equal to four, or that the angles in a square figure are right angles?" Certainly. "But," you say, "the truth of the Bible has been questioned; and who ever questioned the truths of pure mathematics, or his own existence, or the facts of an external world?" Who? Dear friend, I can give you a plenty of names of men who have doubted mathematical and material certainties just as much as anybody ever doubted the divine origin of the Bible. And here I come to just the point which I wish to present in this chapter.

All that people have said or are now saying about the Bible not being true does not prove that it is not true. Let us trace the analogy or parallel a little way, — just enough to scatter any haze of suspicion or doubt which may have begun to gather in your mind concerning the Bible.

We will take first the analogy of mathematics. You believe that two dollars and two dollars are equal to four dollars, do you not? "Oh, yes." Your experience has taught you that. Let some one who owes you the two and two dollars try to prove that they together make only three dollars, and then see. The two and two are the parts, and the four is their sum, and your arithmetic and algebra tell you of a mathematical axiom by which the whole of anything and all its parts are equal. Axioms! Do you know, my dear friend, that there are men who deny the truth of such things as axioms? You are perfectly sure, if you cut an apple into any number of parts, that all the parts together will just equal the apple. But there are men who are not sure. They deny everything of the sort, and they defy you to prove it. Only a few years ago an Englishman died who would have met you at just this point, and would have told you that it had not been satisfactorily proved to his mind that two and two are equal to four, or that there are any axioms or self-evident truths. And that man was not a dunce. He was one of the most learned and profound thinkers that England ever had. The name of that man is very familiar to you. You have often heard ambitious lecturers quote it on the lyceum platform, much as if he were a personal friend of theirs; it was John Stuart Mill. He was so great a man that almost all England felt



honored when he once consented to be chosen a member of her parliament. Yet this man, in the crowning effort of his life, in his work on *Logic*, consisting of three stately volumes, greatly admired for their clear style and subtle thought, affirms that for aught we know to the contrary two and two may make five in some other world. He says that two and two do not necessarily make four. We wrongly infer that they do, because we have always seen them doing it. Some time we may see differently, and then we shall be tempted to make a different inference. We should not make any inference. All we can truly say is that so far as our experience goes two and two make four; it is not true that of themselves they always necessarily do this.

Now the man who was not sure at this point, of course was not sure at a great many other points. He saw no proof that the soul lives after the death of the body, no proof of the obligations of morality. Religion and government were to him only a kind of expediency, and merely provisional at that. But when such a man as that says that the Bible has not been proved true, or when any of his pretentious imitators say it, I think we have no occasion to be disturbed or unsettled in our minds. Very likely if you had gone to him and heard him talk in his wise way on the subject of axioms, you would have been caught in the meshes of his rea-

soning, and would have come away doubting that there are any axioms. Yet nothing can be more certain than they. And hence, when men doubt the divine origin of the Bible, and entangle you in their doubts, it may nevertheless be as sure that God has spoken to us in that sacred volume as that two and two make four. If the keenest thinkers can doubt the certainty of the laws of mathematics, be not surprised when you stumble on doubts concerning the Bible, whether in other men's minds or your own. The fault is not in the Bible, but in those who doubt. Some mental eccentricity, or wrong point of view, or unsuspected power of sin in them, warps their judgment. The fact that Mr. Mill and his followers doubt the axioms in your arithmetic does not cause you to throw your arithmetic away; and so you have no cause to throw away your Bible, or to be at all anxious lest it should turn out untrue, though there may be many around you who deny that it came from God. I come back, then, to the point from which I set out, and I still affirm as stoutly as ever that nothing, not even mathematical axioms, can be more sure than that God has spoken to men and given us an adequate record thereof in our Bible. Men can doubt anything however sure, if they try to, or in certain morbid states of mind. Why should we be alarmed, then, when they doubt the Bible?

There is one thing, dear friend, of which I

know that you are perfectly certain; that is your own personal existence. You say that to doubt it would be the height of absurdity, and you wonderingly ask me if I ever heard of a person who doubted his own existence. Most certainly I have, dear friend. I have heard of a great many, and some of them were very distinguished men in their way. They were not what we call crazy persons, but wholly sane and full of fine mental energy. Yet they doubted their personal existence. You behold, then, what a sea you are sailing out upon, if you let yourself be led away by those who distrust the Bible. The sea of doubt is a troubled and shoreless sea. You may begin the voyage, but you will never end it save by returning to the point from which you set out. You say, "I hear these men affirming that the Bible is not God's book, and they are scholarly, honest, manly men. I think I will go with them a little, as something in me prompts me to do." But you forget what a terrible journey of unbelief you are entering upon. As they doubt the Bible, and try to make you believe their doubt, so, as we have seen, there are others still who doubt axioms and try to make them believe that doubt; and others still who doubt their personal existence, and will fortify this last doubt with many plausible arguments. Do you ask me to name one of the men who have carried their skepticism to this absurd

extreme? Well, there are a great many of them, eminent men, scholars, poets, profound thinkers, who have made and are still making a great deal of stir in the world, I will name one, who seems to me to have been the foremost of those in modern times who have gone away into this kind of unbelief. His name was Benedict Spinoza, and he was what is usually called a pantheist. Pantheism, as the word implies, is the doctrine that God includes all real existence within himself. Nothing but God, that is, really exists. You and I have no right to think of ourselves as persons, for we are not persons. We are only emanations of God, and are still a part of him, just as the solar rays are a part of the sun, as the ripples are a part of the brook on which we see them. Our whole life is only an illusion, a dream, a fancy, the emptiest and vainest of deceptions. In all the universe there is nothing but God, and he is the universe. You and I and all other beings and objects are literally nothing, only as the drops of rain or the snowflakes which sink into the ocean out of which they came. You may have read some of the books of the German author Goethe; he was very much of this way of thinking. You are familiar with Mr. Carlyle's works, with Mr. Emerson's; they, too, think very much as Goethe thought. So you see, surprising as it is that a man should doubt his own personal existence, there

are men who do it. And they are not stupid and foolish men. They are men who have many disciples, and whom multitudes very much admire. But I think most men and women are pretty thoroughly persuaded of their own existence, notwithstanding all this doubt which has been thrown upon the subject. It is as large a mass of doubt as that which has been thrown around the Bible, and it comes for the most part from a far more respectable source. I think, then, if such solid facts as our own personal existence may be brought into doubt by those who follow their imagination and their logic, we had better not grow suspicious of our Bibles because they, too, are doubted. We had better hold on to them, and be firm in the faith that they are God's message to us, till we find other grounds of distrust for them than those which lead on to the denial of anything and everything.

Let us look at another fact, the most solemn and blessed, as it is to me the most certain of all things, — I mean our God himself, — let us look and see how even his existence has been doubted. We have just seen that one class of doubters make him the only real thing, declaring that men and worlds are but illusive emanations from him constantly falling back into him. Now we look on another class who take just the opposite extreme, denying that there is a God, and asserting that the

only real thing is matter. Matter, they say, was not created, but is self-existent, eternal. The universe is a universe of material forces. Matter, taking shape and moving by virtue of its own inherent laws, has given us what we call mind and spirit, — the ideas out of which each man imagines his own God, and so on. Yet our assurance that there is a God comes with us into life. It is part of the very make-up of the human soul. Only sin and ignorance and worldliness can obscure it. The more pure in heart we are, the more distinctly we see God. And now behold how this precious and sacred verity has been brought into doubt. Men have not been content simply to believe in God, but have tried to find him out, to comprehend him, to understand him. And they have been so baffled in what they have tried to do as first to doubt that there is a God, and then to deny his existence altogether. Do you wonder, then, that men are found who doubt the Bible? What is more sure than the existence of God, whose existence so many have denied? And therefore nothing may be more sure than that the Bible is God's book, though some say it is not. Two and two make four, though Stuart Mill doubts it. We have each a personal existence, though Spinoza says we have not. There is a God, however much men may deny all things but matter. And so all the doubts which men have had concerning the

Bible do not prove that it is untrue. In the midst of all these doubts it may be just as sure as that there are axioms, that you and I are persons, that God exists. You see, then, what a Protean thing doubt is. It is all the time changing into something else while you try to lay hold of it. When you doubt your Bible you have simply gone down one step of the stairway. There is another step below that, then another, and then another; nor can you stop till you doubt the trustworthiness of your own faculties, and conclude, even if there be such a thing as truth anywhere, that it is not possible for you ever to find it.

What is more sure to you than the solid earth on which you walk, the brooks which warble at your feet, the woods lifting their glorious arches and chanting a perpetual anthem all through their solemn aisles? And yet, dear friend, there have been, and still are, men who doubt the reality of an external world. "What a strange doubt," you say. It is strange, but it is by no means uncommon. There are many men now living, in this country and elsewhere, who will tell you that they believe in ideas, in the sensations and experiences of their own minds, but the existence of matter, of anything external to them, is yet to be proved. There was not long ago in Germany a man named Hegel who taught something of this sort, and he has to-day many disciples. He

would tell you that your own thinking is all which makes anything real to you. For you there is an outward world only because you think there is. You make your own world, your own God, your own friends, and wealth and poverty, by your thinking. Cease to think that they are yours, and so far as you are concerned they have no longer any existence. There are men now living, whose names you have heard so often that I will not repeat them, who say that we can never know anything outside of ourselves. We can know what we inwardly experience, — our sensations, our thoughts, or feelings and desires, and that is all. Even our sensations are limited to appearances, constantly changing phenomena; they never extend to the fixed substances, the underlying causes of things. You think you put a real coal of fire to some real gunpowder, and that you thereupon see a real flash, of which the fire is the cause. But this is only your own thinking; it took place wholly within yourself; it proves nothing outside of you. You have no right to say that the coal caused the flash, or that there was any flash, or powder, or fire; you know only what took place in your own mind, how it seemed to you, what your impressions were. "Silly men," you say, "to doubt what is so real." Yet they will argue very acutely and very plausibly to establish their doubt. If you read their



books much, or hear them lecture, or talk with them, just as likely as not you will forget your own common sense, and be led on step by step into their subtleties till you are just as much in doubt of an external world as they are.

You see, then, what a large number of perfectly sure things there are which you can come to be in doubt of, if you once let yourself fall into the habit of doubting. You can doubt that there is any material world about you, that there is any God, that you are yourself a real person; you can doubt that there are any such things as axioms in mathematics, that your own faculties of mind are trustworthy. And all along in this process of doubting you will find yourself, speaking after the manner of men, in very good company. Surely, then, my dear friend, you will not conclude that the Bible is untrue, even if you should hear a great many learned and ingenious men say that it is. According to all analogy, as we have just seen, a great many things may be true which learned and ingenious men doubt. Are you prepared to go all lengths with such men? They will not deny to you the divine origin of the Bible any more than they will deny a hundred other most real and precious things. Doubt is like that fire sometimes seen in low, swampy places by night, which leads away those who follow it till they are lost and perish. When you quit your

Bible, no longer believing it to be the sure word of God, and choose the path of doubt, experience writes, "All hope abandon, ye who enter here," over the gate by which you start into that path.

You have heard the story of the Sibyl who came to one of the early Roman kings with the prophetic books. She offered to sell them to him, but asked a very high price, which he refused to pay, whereupon she went off and burnt a portion of them. Then she came back to the king and offered him what were left; but he again refused, and again she went and burnt some more of them. Again the third time she came back, now bringing only three books of the nine she had first brought, still urging the king to buy them, and demanding the original price. Her strange behavior induced him to accept her terms; otherwise the whole of the Sibylline books, afterwards so dear to the Roman people, would have been lost. Thus it is, dear friend, that certain great truths, — the Bible, your own existence, God, things which are self-evident, — come to you. You can have them all by believing, and by doubting you can lose them all. If you have already doubted some of them, stop where you are, as the Roman king at length stopped, and retrace your way to the point at which you began to doubt, that all the treasures may still be yours; for these great truths are not like the Sibyl's books, — they have not been

burnt, nor can they be destroyed, and however you may have let go your hold on any of them, they will come back to you through Him in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid. Be not disturbed by any voices of doubt concerning the Bible, since those same voices would lead you on to doubt what is truest and most precious in life; but in the midst of them all, with a vast multitude of the best and greatest men, and in obedience to the central instinct of your own soul, still say: "Nothing can be more sure than that God has spoken to men, and that our Bible is such a record as we need of what he has said."

## CHAPTER II.

### GOD DESIRES TO REVEAL HIMSELF.

“NOTHING can be more sure than that God has spoken to men, and that our Bible is such a record as we need of what he has said.”

I do not pretend that this statement was positively proved in what I said concerning it in the chapter before this. But I think some steps were taken in the way to positive proof. At least it was shown, I think, that we have no more reason to doubt the Bible on account of what has been said against it than we have to doubt what are known as absolute certainties on account of what has been said against them. It does not shake our faith in the mathematical axioms that two and two are equal to four, and the whole of anything is equal to the sum of all its parts, because certain philosophers have denied that such axioms are necessarily true. It has been stoutly denied that we have any personal existence, yet we know that we have. It has been ingeniously argued that we cannot prove an external world, yet we know that such a world exists. Some have claimed that matter is the only reality, yet we know that there are ideas and spirit. Others have claimed that ideas

are all there is, yet we know that besides these there is both spirit and matter. Seeing how all these solid realities have been doubted, we are not disposed to cast away our Bibles on account of what has been said against them.

I now take up another point, which is, that God must needs desire to reveal himself to men, and to provide for an authentic record of that revelation. Can you think of anything more strange than that God should shut himself away from men, and really choose to have nothing more to do with them? Consider what our idea of God is, — that necessary idea of Him which we all bring with us into life. He is our Father. That word "Father" comes the nearest of any, perhaps, to a full expression of his character; yet we must add other words in order to get the whole. Think what an earthly father is, — one who fills out the meaning of the word. Does he willingly let his children get separated from, and allow all intercourse between them and him to cease? Certainly not. He knows that they are dependent on him, and he wishes to provide for their daily wants; he knows that temptations to evil are all around them, and he wishes to save them out of those temptations; he knows that they are often disinclined to struggle up the hard path of virtue and truth, and he wishes to stimulate them and cheer them on in that path. Now take this good earthly father,

and imagine all his love for his children infinitely increased, and you come to our idea of what God is to all men. What is the earthly father's love to the heavenly Father's? If the earthly father so clings to his children, is loth to be separated from them, does not forget them but often visits them after they have gone out from under his roof, shall the heavenly Father wholly leave His children to themselves? Shall he stop all intercourse with us, send us no message, not even a letter to assure us of his remembrance and love? Certainly this would be strange. Nothing could be stranger. We must give up that necessary idea which we have of God as a Father, and think of him as more heartless than the worst earthly parent can be, if he never has any wish to speak to us or to have us come near to him.

God is not only the ideal and infinite Father, but all the elements of a true motherhood are in him. Thus we think of him. Such is the idea of him with which we are born into the world. Let a mother's child be separated from her, and let her fear that he may be lost. What is there that she will not do to recover him? To what part of the world will she not go, what pleasures not give up, what dangers and hardships not encounter? Her reason goes out of her when all hope that she shall again see her child or know his fate is at an end. Most surely, then, arguing

from what God is, from what we know that he must be, it would be a wholly strange and unaccountable thing that he should not desire to reveal himself to men. Do you expect the father and mother to go after their lost children? to write them loving letters of sympathy, counsel, and warning, when they are away at school or trying to take care of themselves in life? Certainly you expect it of them. And you cannot expect anything less from God. You naturally expect a great deal more from him: more thoughtfulness, more heart-yearning, more sending, and writing, and coming, and doing, — infinitely more. How strange a thing that God should put us here in this world, and then desire to have no more intercourse with us!

But this desire of God to be revealed to us must be vastly stronger in view of our sore need of such a revelation. Not only has he the fatherly and motherly feeling, but the sentiment of pity in him is infinite. We are more than his children; we are his estranged and sinning children. If there is no other eye to pity, surely he will pity; he will save if there be no other arm to save. He sees how unhappy we are amid the things of the world, with which we seek to please ourselves. Our consciences trouble us; we have fearful apprehensions of evil to come; we are full of unrest, yearning discontentedly for we can

hardly tell what, amid all earthly joys. He knows that this wretchedness in us may go on increasing till it shall become a fiery and endless torture. And this misery is due to our separation from him. There is a child-nature in us answering to the fatherhood in him. It is this divine nature in us which makes us so wretched amid worldly delights. It lives on, a kind of living death, — dead, yet groaning, in the midst of trespasses and sins. It cries out, though with a bewildered, unknowing cry, for the living God. Shall that image of God in us, that spirit which he breathed into man at the beginning, be recovered to him while it is capable of such return, or shall it be let alone till it cannot possibly be brought back? Surely, we say, God will not keep away from those who are in such a state. It is not necessary for the Bible to tell us that he is a God of compassions; he is, as our own natural and necessary idea of him tells us. Since he is God, he must desire to interpose; since he is God, the God who is love, he must desire to reveal himself to us and save us from our sins while salvation is possible.

When a ship is lost at sea we send out other ships along her track in the hope that she may be found. Surely, then, God will do something to recover his lost children in this world. Years ago Sir John Franklin was lost in the Arctic



seas. You remember, or have read, how this country and England, moved by the appeals of his noble wife, sent men and ships to search for him. And shall we expect God to do nothing for his children who have strayed far from him, who are wretched and growing more wretched in their bondage to sin, and who will reach the land of hopelessness if permitted to go on? He will interpose; he will reveal himself; he will speak; he will have the story of his coming so written down that all may read and believe it. Not only his own fatherly nature, but our wretched condition will lead him to do it. He will do it unless there be some obstacle in the way which his own omnipotence cannot overcome.

If there were a wrecked steamer on our coast, with a large number of our friends and relatives on board of it, think you we could stand on the rocks and look off indifferently upon it? How we should signal those friends to hold out! how we should launch our life-boats, or shoot to them the lines and cables with which to help themselves ashore! Nothing but utter powerlessness on our part would let us see one of them drown. And is God less desirous of saving the imperilled than we are? We act on the low plane of the temporal life, he on the high plane of the eternal. What is the death from which we would save those wrecked voyagers to that from which he

would save all straying and sinning souls? He knows that he is our life and our home, but he sees us separated from him, and wandering in the midst of peril, far away. No matter that it is our own fault. We have forsaken God; but God would cease to be God if he should forsake us. He will at least make a way for us to escape. We are not the less wretched, but the more, because we are guilty and ill-deserving.

All our sinning against him cannot make him cease to be the compassionate Father which he is. Look at our case any way you will, and it is clear that God must desire with a very great desire to reveal himself to us in his saving mercy. If there be any claims of justice in the way, any condemnation, any honor of his own name and throne, he will provide for these. He will put all obstacles out of the way, so far as his infinite power and wisdom enable him to; and he will come to us in the plenitude of his yearning love, and will graciously do all that he wisely and consistently can, to restore the lost connection between us and himself. As surely as God is God, and we his children have gone away from him into woe and sin; as surely as we need to be recovered into the ways of truth and blessedness, in which he our divine Father forever walks, so surely he must desire to interpose, — to speak to us the word of counsel and warning; to do whatever the nature of

things will permit him to do that we may be restored to his own holy and blessed paths. Does the earthly father's yearning bring him out to meet the prodigal son, and shall not God come out to us? Does the woman sweep her house for the lost piece of silver, and shall he not search for us as with broom and candle? Does the shepherd go after the sheep on the mountain, and shall God willingly let any soul wander away and be lost?

We expect God to reveal himself to men, not only because he as our Father desires to, and we need that he should, but because he hates sin and desires to increase the sum of holiness in his dominions by all possible means. He is himself holy, and he would see all his children conformed to that law of holiness which guides him in his whole conduct. There are not two laws, — one for him and another for us. There is but one law. He lives and reigns that holiness may abound; and all men were created for this one high end. So much the very idea of God which we all naturally have forces us to believe. And therefore we must believe that he does not wish to stay away from us, but desires to reveal himself to us; for we know that we have all sadly swerved from the law of perfect holiness and truth, and need some divine power to bring us back to it. Whether we have any Bibles or not, we know as often as we reflect

that there are wicked ways in us, and that God alone can lead us in the way everlasting. May I not therefore venture to repeat with some assurance my first proposition, "that nothing can be more sure than that God has spoken to men?" Does not this seem very sure, though not positively proved, in view of God's strong desire to reveal himself to us? — a desire which he must feel, both in virtue of his fatherly nature and on account of our perishing need of succor, as also that he may turn us from sin to holiness, which is the highest and last end of all that he does? Certainly, I think we are ready to admit the revelation as a fact, though the nature of it may need yet to be considered.

The assertion of this chapter is that "God must needs desire to reveal himself to men, and to provide for an authentic record of that revelation." Let us look a little at the second part of the statement, — the authentic record. Of course, the record is nothing but for the facts recorded; and the whole value of the record, that is of our Bible, lies in the assumption that it is an authentic account of the special ways in which God has revealed himself to our sinful race. "But why these special revelations requiring him to provide some extraordinary record of them?" you may ask. Why is not nature a sufficient revelation of God to men? Nature can tell us something of God, but not that which we most need to know. She

cannot reveal to us his moral attributes, though she may show us something of those which are natural. Nature tells us that God is powerful, since he makes and preserves the world; that he is wise, since he everywhere adapts means to ends. But she does not tell us that he is gracious, that he forgives sin, that he is compassionate and merciful; she does not clearly tell us that he is good or just. If we attempt to prove from nature that God is good, we find many facts which of themselves go to show that he is not good. Why does he send pestilence and famine on the innocent? Why do so many persons die almost as soon as they begin to live! So, too, we need something besides nature or history to prove the justice of God. We see the wicked prosper, and the righteous under calamity. Nature seems to reward those who are evil, and to punish those who are good. She does not vindicate even the righteousness of God. And what can she tell us of his pity, of his fatherly tenderness, of his mercy and pardoning love? God himself must speak to men in order to assure them of these. He must speak to his children who are made in his own image, who are themselves capable of the moral emotions which he feels. Only men created after his likeness can know what he means when he speaks of his grace, of his forgiving and renewing mercy. It is far above nature; only men to whom God

himself comes can understand it, and such alone can give a true account of it to others. God must forever be the unknown God unless there are men to whom he directly speaks, and whom he enables to write down what he says for other men to read. And we cannot be wholly satisfied with what inspired men have seen and heard, however accurately they have described it all. We demand a higher revelation than that which comes by any merely human agency. Only when the Word becomes flesh, when God enters into humanity and declares himself the Saviour of every man, do we see the Father as we have yearned that we might. If there have been no holy men speaking as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, our case demands that there should be ; and God, who longs to save us, must desire such an order of men. And if God has spoken, we demand, and he must desire, that there should be accurate pens to record what he has said. And if God himself has not yet come and spoken in the flesh, we are all the time expecting that he will ; for our lost state is such as to require the most perfect possible revelation of his love ; and such a revelation he, as our infinite Father, must above all things else desire to give to us.

You know Mrs. Hemans's familiar nursery hymn of the boy in the battle of the Nile, who was burned to death by standing at the post where

his father had put him. That child's faith in his father was unfaltering, — a beautiful and heroic trust. What a tribute to the father's goodness and fidelity it was! The boy did not know that his father had been slain; supposed him to be still alive, and therefore he felt perfectly safe in obeying orders and waiting for that father to bring him relief. But the God who is our Father is not dead. He is just what our own highest idea of him makes him to be, — the loving and ever-living Father of us all. He either has come or he will come; for he knows our peril better than we do, and our most childlike faith that he will succor us is as nothing to his infinite desire to bring us help. It is related of a famous army officer of England, that while he was but a child his father one day left him on London Bridge, telling him to stay there till he should come back for him. The father went on his errands, became so absorbed as to wholly forget his promise; returned home in the evening and was quietly reading when, missing the boy and asking after him, he was told that he had not been seen throughout the day. At once he be-thought him, and seizing his hat said, "I know where he is, and I will go for him." He went to the bridge, and there the boy was waiting for him to come. Dear friend, could that child so trust his forgetful father, and cannot we trust our God who never forgets? Surely we will not withhold

from him the tribute which the child gave to an earthly parent. He has not left men desolate through all these thousands of years. They have needed his succor, and he has had an infinite yearning to give it to them. How we misunderstand him, and what a grievous wrong we do to his fatherly feelings if we say that he has shut us out from his presence, and has no desire that we should again look on his face.

Those who have read Mr. Stanley's account of his journey through the "Dark Continent," remember what a sad case he was in as he neared the western coast, and how implicitly he relied on the friendly aid of strangers living at Embomma to save him and his party from impending death. They had turned away from the terrible river, and had left the brave little boat, the "Lady Alice," brought all the way from England, "to bleach and rot to dust." At first they tried to march overland to the coast, but after a little gave up in utter despair. They had reached a small village of savages, and the account says: "Marching through the one street of the village in melancholy and silent procession, voiceless as sphinxes, we felt our way down into a deep gully, and crawled up again to the level of the village site, and camped about two hundred yards away. They could go no further; relief must come to them or they must die. The leader of the party



now wrote a letter, addressed to any gentleman who speaks English at Embomma," in which he said: "I have arrived at this place from Zanzibar with one hundred and fifteen souls, — men, women, and children. We are now in a state of imminent starvation. We can buy nothing from the natives. . . . I do not know you; but am told that there is an Englishman at Embomma, and, as you are a Christian, I beg you not to disregard my request." He then tells what his most urgent needs are, and adds, "The supplies must arrive within two days, or I may have a fearful time of it among the dying." His confidence proved not to be misplaced. Sooner than they had dared hope, and while they were struggling forward, "haggard, woebegone invalids, with bloated faces, but terribly angular bodies," the messengers reappeared, bringing more than had been sent for, and the cry arose, "It is true! it is true! food! food, at last! We are saved, thank God!" Dear friends, what was the faith which Stanley had in English generosity to that which we should have in our gracious and loving God! We need not apprise him that we are without hope in the world; for he knows it much better than we. We need not try to awaken his sympathy: he yearns to help us more than we long for help. He has helped us. He has come unto us. His fatherly desire to rescue us would not let him

do otherwise. As sure as he is God, and we are his famished children, there is somewhere bread which he has sent from heaven, — somewhere the word which he has spoken and which is the life and light of men.

## CHAPTER III.

### GOD CAN REVEAL HIMSELF.

ACCORDING to the necessary idea which we have of God, he must desire to reveal himself to men : he is our Father, who would not be separated from his children, who especially yearns to come and save us out of the sins in which we are wandering.

But in order that God may reveal himself to us he must work a miracle. The revelation is itself a miracle, — the one comprehensive miracle in which all others that we have to do with are included. Having seen that God desires to be revealed to men, our next question is, whether or not he can thus reveal himself, — can he do that which, by the very necessity of the case, is essentially miraculous? What is a miracle? It is something which men see, and which they cannot account for apart from the immediate agency of God. The creation of the world, if we had been there to see it, would have been to us a stupendous miracle. The upholding of nature in all her movements and processes, if we could see that she is upheld of God, would be to us a perpetual miracle. Anything is a miracle which God himself manifestly does ; and therefore the question

whether he can reveal himself, as he desires to, is the question whether he can do what is miraculous. The revelation of God to men, whatever shape it takes, must be a miracle so far as it is real. Where there is no miracle there is no revelation.

You see, then, my dear friend, assuming that our Bible is a record of God's revelation of himself to men, why we should not be at all surprised that it is a story of miracles from beginning to end. Indeed, miracles are the first things we look for in it; and if we missed these we should throw it aside as not the revelation we are seeking. There have been persons, you know, who have tried to explain away miracles. They all admit that the Bible is in the main a true history; but they try to account for the miracles in it on natural principles. They say that the walls of Jericho fell down owing to the vibratory motion which the marching of the host about the city, and the blowing of the horns, gave to them. They say that Christ did not walk on the sea, but along its edge, whence he reached down his hand and saved Peter. They say that Lazarus was not really raised, but that some of Christ's friends started a report to that effect after the crucifixion. Thus have these critics gone through the Bible. Anything which they cannot possibly account for on natural principles they throw out. What they

cannot plausibly explain they often seek to account for in the most absurd and puerile manner. They do not hesitate to say that the writers were mistaken; that they admitted ill-founded rumors into their narrative; that they exaggerated; that in their enthusiasm they said things which our cooler judgment must reject.

How strange that men should take so much pains to throw out of the Bible just that we should expect to find in it, — that which we first of all look for, which is involved in the very idea of a revelation from God, without which we can never have a revelation! You might as well take all the light out of the sun and still call it the sun, as all the miracles out of a revelation and still call it a revelation. It is not the book which is full of miraculous accounts, but that which is without them, which has no title to our belief or respect while it claims to be from God. If it is from God, it will speak of the works of God, which are miracles; for in no other way can it reveal God to us. When God comes among men, it is that he may be made manifest to them, not that he may continue to be the unknown God.

There are earthly princes who travel *incognito* among their subjects or in foreign lands. But do they do this from any desire to reveal themselves? Certainly not. They act from just the opposite motive. They desire to conceal themselves.

They do not wish it to be known who they are, lest they should be annoyed with attentions; lest they should miss the leisure and enjoyment which they seek; lest they should fail to see the people in their common, everyday condition. Of course they do not wish to be revealed; to have those among whom they go know who they are. In the same way spies and detectives, policemen in citizen's clothes, go about. They do not wish to be revealed, but to be hidden, that they may ferret out some crime, or mature some mischief or conspiracy which they are planning. The workers of iniquity, and the officers of human law, hide themselves. But God is not a detective, nor a spy, nor an earthly prince. We know very well that we cannot hide our faults from him. And his object in coming is to deliver, to warn, to counsel, and to save. Shall we ever annoy him with our attentions? Most surely we shall not. He knows all about us before he comes. He comes to sympathize with us, to assure us that he is our loving Father, and the more we throng about him and besiege him for favors the better pleased with us he is. Occasionally a great king, or queen, or an ex-president travels openly so as to be seen and honored of all. Thus God does for our sake, and thus alone can he be revealed to us. He might as well not come at all if he comes only in disguise, so that we do not know who he

is. You have read many descriptions of the "progress," so called, of an eastern king. He moves through his dominions at the head of a splendid retinue. When he comes to a new province the people swarm forth to meet him. They straighten the crooked roads, they level mountains, and fill up valleys, and everywhere the cry goes up, "Prepare you a way for the king, who is coming to show himself unto his humble people!" Somewhat in this way Christ rode into Jerusalem, and that triumphal entry was not an act of vanity but of tender and lowly love.

Thus it is that God must ever come, not disguised under natural law, but in his own proper person, or how can he be revealed? He does not wish to be disguised; he wants us to know that it is he who speaks to us, that it is in truth his own almighty arm which is made bare. You see, therefore, that we speak only in a very limited and qualified sense when we say that God is revealed in nature. Nature suggests that there is a God; still our hearts cry, "Show us the Father." Nature is that veil on the image of Isis which no man could lift. God cannot be wholly in nature, and when he comes and speaks to us, when he really and truly reveals himself, the transaction must be supernatural; it must be miraculous just to the extent that God is revealed.

When a fellow-man comes among us we expect

him to act in accordance with his own character. If Mr. Tennyson should come among us, we should expect him to act like the shy and solitude-loving poet that he is. If an ambitious aspirant to fame and power should come, we should expect him to bluster about and make the most of his chances for showing himself off. We expect to see all persons acting in character, — the benevolent man benevolently, the selfish man selfishly, the proud man proudly, the vain man vainly, the modest man modestly, and so on. And now when God comes we do not expect him to act like some one else, but like himself, a wonder-working God. If he did only as others do, or only as we see nature doing, he would not be revealed. We should miss that which the very idea of such a revelation involves. If we take up a treatise on some subject in nature, the facts all carefully gathered, the reasonings logical, written with scientific accuracy, we should reject it at once if it claimed to come from God. There is nothing miraculous in it; it only explains the doings of natural forces, and therefore it cannot be a revelation of God. God is not in it, but only nature and human skill. When God comes, when he makes a progress through his dominions, and shows himself to men, he must be properly attended, and his proper attendants are miracles. They are his own acts, which neither man nor



nature can do, but only he. As in the Apocalyptic scene the hosts of heaven rode on white horses after Him who had on his vesture the name "King of Kings and Lord of Lords," so when God comes to men we look to see miracles following in his train. We throw aside the books which have nothing miraculous in them, with the ready remark, "These can be no revelation of God."

But when we take up a book whose first sentence is, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," we are encouraged to read on. It is just what we expect when we find him speaking to his first-created child in the cool of the day. This book is not a mockery on the face of it, but reads like a true revelation of God; for it speaks of God as coming to men in dreams, as talking with them, as calling out the good from among the evil to be especially his. We are glad to hear it tell of the plagues in Egypt, of the divided sea, of the manna and quails, and the pillar of cloud and fire, of the sun and moon that stood still, of the fire that came down on Carmel, of the great fish by which the Lord's servant was saved. We do not throw aside such a book as this, claiming to tell us what God has done among men, but are fascinated, and read on and on.

It is above man; it is above nature; it is wholly divine and God-like, — just what we should expect in the revelation for which we long, when we read

that Jesus was born of a virgin, that he opened blind eyes and deaf ears and dumb mouths, that he made the palsied and crippled and leprous leap to their feet and walk, that he stood at the grave and said with a voice which the dead heard and obeyed, "Lazarus, come forth." If we believed in nothing but nature we might reject such a book, but we believe in God, and these are just such mighty deeds as we expect him to perform. We put ourselves beside St. Paul speaking to Agrippa. When St. Paul spoke of our Lord's resurrection, Agrippa, having only natural forces in mind, doubted. "Oh, yes," reasons Paul, "you may doubt if you know only nature, but I am speaking of God, and why should you think it a thing impossible that God, with whom all things are possible, should raise the dead?" We are glad of all the history, the doctrine, the ethical instruction which the book contains; but we are especially glad of the miracles in it, since these are what we first seek in any revelation of God. These, like the light of the sun, tell us that there is a sun; these, like the royal retinue, tell us that the personage who is moving through is indeed a Prince. Take these away and our interest in the volume would be gone. It could not be the revelation which our God desires to make, and which we need to receive. We should turn away from it as from a firmament which had lost its stars.

And God *can* surround himself with these mighty works when he comes among men. Look at this statement a moment. We are God's children. And do you think he would make a world whose laws and natural forces should rise up as a separating wall between us and him? Most surely he would not. Our idea of God obliges us to feel that he saw the end from the beginning. He knew whether or not the time would ever come when he could not control nature, when he could not overrule or use her forces in the interest of his children, before he set up her framework. Certainly he would not have built that framework if it were ever to shut him away from those for whose sake he made it, if it were ever to keep him from coming to them and saving them out of any error or sin into which they might fall. It is written on the tablet of our hearts that man is God's crowning work, — that he stands at the head of creation. We see man having dominion over God's other works. We feel that all nature is a mistake if her forces cannot be wielded for the advantage of men. There would not be a material creation with its laws and forces if God cannot come through it, stop its movements, modify and control its action, as may be necessary for the good of his own immortal children. God not only desires to reveal himself to us, but he can do so, although a stupendous miracle is involved in the very idea of

such a revelation. It is infinitely easy for him to do what so amazes us, as he must have seen when he made the world.

And how glorious the character of God seems to us while he is thus caring for the least and most distant of the creatures made in his image! I have heard men say that it does not comport with the dignity of the infinite God to be so concerned for the inhabitants of this little world. Ah, dear friend, they do not know what that word "infinite" means, — what possibilities are in it, what responsibilities it involves! Why do we say that a great man lowers himself by familiarity with the mean and vile? Only because he is not infinitely great. He has his limitations. He cannot do all things. If he cares so much for what is beneath his station he may neglect more important things. He is capable of stain, and may not keep himself unspotted from the world if he mixes too freely with it. But let him be infinite, let him have all power, let him be incapable of wrong or stain, and we should reason just the other way. We say that he ought to stoop in love to every soul of man, since he can do it and still be true to himself and every other interest. The sun floods with light every crevice of the world which is open to him; yet he is not thereby impoverished. The tides of the ocean fill and overflow the smallest creeks and inlets all around its vast shores, unto

the end of the world; and this is just what the ocean should do, since its depths are in no danger of being drained. In like manner God does not need to husband his resources. They can never give out.

If the universe should fall back into chaos, he could again call it forth; could bring all its parts together, part to part, in beautiful and harmonious array, and command them to resume their orderly march. A scholar once said, rather vainly perhaps, that when he wanted a new book he made it. But God can truly say that he makes a new world as often as he needs it for any purpose of his. And it becomes him not only to make worlds but destroy them, to rearrange them, to thrust his mighty arm through their intricate maze of natural law, for the sake of his children whom he crowned with glory and honor, and set over all the works of his hand. That he should neglect these would be the strange and amazing thing. But when we see him caring for them, rolling up the curtain of nature's laws, and stepping forth in love to lay hold of his least and lowest child, then we feel that he is true to our own idea of the infinite Father. In that revelation, that miracle, we see nature not degraded but ennobled; put to her highest and most sacred uses; her ten thousand voices never praise God more than when she is wielded, or overruled, or set aside, that God may

fulfil his desire of reaching and rescuing lost men.

The form of the miracle in which God must ever be garmented when he comes to men may and should change at every stage of human development, but the miracle in its essence can never be absent. Some persons seem to think that all miracles are external, in the world of matter, addressed to the bodily senses. And they ask, as though they had raised a formidable objection, "why have miracles ceased?" In the broad sense of the word, my dear friends, miracles have not ceased. God is still revealing himself to men, and speaking to them as unmistakably as he ever spoke. Ah, if we would but listen, if we had ears to hear, there would be no doubt in our minds that God still walks in the midst of his churches. Dull as we are, he makes us pass through seasons of special awakening, of the turning of wicked men to him in such wondrous ways that we are forced to exclaim, "This is not man's doing; lo! God is here!" When man fell from God he went as far down as it was possible for him to go. The descent was not gradual, but sudden and to the lowest extreme. Man fell as the Son of the Morning before him had fallen. The spirit in him came into subjection to the flesh, and in his fleshly nature man was but a savage even in the garden of Eden. He was an amiable savage at first, but

became fierce and murderous as soon as the spirit in him fell.

Now God, in revealing himself to his fallen child, must take into account this savage nature which controlled him. That nature could be penetrated, and the enslaved spirit reached, only by revelations which should startle, which should terrify, which should compel attention, and overawe and subdue. It was necessary that God should make much use of the element of fear in his first comings to men, in order that they might be induced to give him heed. But as man grew less barbarous, approached nearer to civilization, became developed in mind and heart, God showed himself less in outward and startling ways. Mount Sinai was changed to the Mount of Beatitudes as soon as the world was ready. When the blessed Son of God was needed rather than the terrible Elijah, that Son of God came, meek and lowly, born of a virgin. The miraculous element was still there in all its wonderfulness, — yet how changed in its form! In like manner while God was providing for a record of so many of his revelations as the world might afterwards need, it was necessary that wonders in the world of matter, signs of his presence and approval, should attend his servants. But now, those appointed servants having written out that record, the world having at length received a volume giving it such guidance as it

needs in spiritual things, the occasion for the outward manifestations is gone, and they are withdrawn. God still reveals himself, he speaks to men; the essential element in the first miracles is yet with us. But men are not what they once were. Probably the worst savage of to-day is less wild than the primitive man. Though the spirits of men are still in bondage to the flesh, their hearts and minds have been growing toward refinement, in some races less and in others more, through thousands of years. Those which are now lowest down have for the most part each had their turn of standing highest. They have fallen a second time by despising the divine mercy which came to them to save. If God has ceased to speak to any, it is because it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance. Still, so far as we are concerned, it is true that the revelation which we need is not outward so much as inward, — not that which startles and terrifies, but that which convinces and persuades.

God desires to speak to us; he can speak to us, however miraculous the act may be; he does speak to us. Not only is he revealed in great revivals of religion, in the conversion of relations to the gospel of his Son, in the bowing of the hardened and reckless worldling in penitence and faith; but to you and to me, in our conscience, in the silence and secrecy of our own thought, he is daily re-



vealed, speaking courage to us if we faint in his service, saying unto us, if we yet stray in the paths of sin, "Oh, my child, why not turn unto me? Will you not from this time say unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?"

"The Lord, how fearful is his name!  
How wide is his command!  
Nature, with all her moving frame,  
Rests on his mighty hand.

"Immortal glory forms his throne,  
And light his awful robe ;  
While with a smile, or with a frown,  
He manages the globe.

"A word of his almighty breath  
Can swell or sink the seas ;  
Build the vast empires of the earth,  
Or break them as he please.

"On angels, with unveiled face,  
His glory beams above ;  
On men he looks with softest grace,  
And takes his title, Love."

## CHAPTER IV.

### INSPIRATION.

IF our Bible is a trustworthy record of words and deeds in which God has revealed himself to men, then must it needs be specially inspired. It must be God's book, not man's. God must be the author of it, however he made use of men in writing it. Under his immediate superintendence and guidance it must have been written, or we cannot accept it as an adequate account of what he has done and said.

We saw in the chapter before this that God's revelation of himself must, from the nature of the case, be wholly miraculous. He is outside of nature, and comes down into her realm by a sovereign act in dealing with us. We cannot rise into sympathy with him, so as accurately to describe what he does for us, unless he lifts us up into such sympathy. The revelation which is miraculously made must be miraculously written down. This is our very short and all-sufficient reply to those who ask us why we believe in the inspiration of the Bible. It must be inspired or it cannot be what we are seeking. It is no revelation of God if it is not God's book. To say

that it is such a revelation, and that it is a merely human book, is a contradiction in terms.

God desired to reveal himself to us because we had left him, and were unable of ourselves to find the way of truth and life. This I have already shown in the last chapter but one. If, now, we say that we can find our way back to God; that we need not to be guided and led; that, uninspired and unhelped, we can write down God's thoughts concerning us, then all occasion for the revelation is taken away. This makes our Bible a merely human book, not a divine revelation; a collection of writings which has no special authority, which we may criticise just as we do other books, rejecting what is above our reason, throwing out of it all that is marvellous or strange. To be worth anything to us it must not only be above nature and reason, but it must bring with it the evidence that it is the word of God. We often say of the Bible that it is God's word; and we must feel that we are right in saying this, or the Bible is of small account to us.

Christ is in the highest sense the word of God, — the word made flesh, as he is the highest divine revelation to men. But it is the office of all words to reveal thoughts, and therefore any book which reveals God's thoughts to us may be called the word of God. He may have employed human agents to write it; but he so lifted them into sym-

pathy with him, so made them see all things from his point of view, so guided and controlled them that the words which they wrote down were not their own, but truly and properly his.

Such is my meaning when I say that the record of God's revelation to us must needs be specially inspired, and is nothing to us so far as it is not. I do not use the word "inspired" as it is often used. There is an inspiration which consists wholly in natural excitement; it is not at all supernatural, miraculous, divine. It is perfectly proper for us to say, using the word in this sense, that any man is inspired who is so aroused and raised up in mind as to give him a magnetic power over us. We perform acts of inspiration, or speak words which charm and subdue men, when thus lifted up in soul. But this is only the inspiration of genius; it is wholly natural; it does not bring with it that divine stamp which any revelation of God must needs have. It was in this merely human, unauthoritative way that Wordsworth was inspired when he wrote his ode on immortality; that Shakespeare was inspired when he wrote Hamlet and Othello and Lear. Some of the greatest poets have represented themselves as under the guidance of a superhuman power in what they wrote. They took up their pen, and then invoked their muse to tell them what they should write. Thus Homer says, at the

beginning of the Iliad, "Sing, oh muse, the wrath of Achilles, which brought woe to the Greeks and sent unnumbered souls to Hades." And at the beginning of the Odyssey he says, "Tell me, oh muse, of the crafty man who sailed over the sea and saw many cities and lands." Virgil, at the beginning of the Æneid, says, "Tell me, oh muse, of the man whom angry Juno drove from Troy to the Lavinian shores." Even Milton, imitating this classic usage, says, at the beginning of his "Paradise Lost," —

"Of man's first disobedience and the fruit  
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste  
Brought death into the world and all our woe,  
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man  
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,  
Sing, heavenly muse."

Such was the ancient custom. Possibly it came down into history from the times when God did indeed speak to his prophets, and tell them what to say from him to men. But the device was dropped after a time, and is now almost never seriously used. The muse was a creation of the poet's fancy; he did not claim to be supernaturally inspired. If asked if he had come to men with a special message from God, he no doubt would have said *no*.

Men of this class, however much genius they may have, and though they say and do wonderful

things, are not on that account God's messengers, of whom he has taken hold and sent them to speak and to write his words. Much humbler men than they, the poor and unlettered, may be God's inspired agents; for he loves to hide from the wise and prudent what he reveals to babes. He told the child Samuel what he did not tell to Eli. He showed to the shepherds of Bethlehem what he did not show to Herod's wise men. He chooses the weak things rather than the mighty, the things which are not rather than the things which are, that no flesh may glory in his presence. There have been better men than Balaam, yet God laid hold of him and made him speak God's thoughts concerning Israel. The more you parade the faults of those who speak and write God's words for him the more do you exalt his sovereignty, the more manifestly do you make their words his words, what they say and do a revelation of his will, who sends by whom he will send. When a book claims to be from God, and bears his marks upon it, its claim is not weakened but strengthened if it has been written by imperfect men. For the best men cannot rise to that revelation; and God, by using the lowest, proves that he can save us all. He by inspiring them shows himself to be the very God whom we need. What he does in them proves that he can save to the uttermost. Thus St. Paul felt while he re-

called the wickedness of his early life, saying : "I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him." If God could save such as Saul of Tarsus, and inspire him to be a revealer of God to others, then is there hope for us all. And our idea of God as the infinite Father is such that this large hope is what we expect a revelation from him especially to bring. The lowly and mean lot on earth of the messengers, and their sins out of which God saves them, are therefore a strong witness that any book which they claim to bring from God is indeed God's message to us. Any man who speaks to us of God must be guided of God ; and the poorer the messenger the richer the hope for us.

It does not become us to say that all the revelations of himself which God has made to any men are recorded in the book which we fondly call our Bible. It does not hinder this Bible from being an adequate revelation for all men to admit that other revelations have been made. I do not say that there are others, but would give any other books claiming to be revelations a chance to prove their claim. I think one thing must always be true of any revelation : it must not be behind the best spirit of the times in which it is made, and it must point the men of those times forward to something

better, not backward to something worse. This criterion is enough to throw out any pretended book of Mormon, the Koran, the sayings and prophesyings of a large class who are always bringing in some new system of religious faith. The Bible which we have can meet this test. No part of it was, so far as it claimed to be from God, behind the best spirit of the age in which it came, while it pointed forward to something better. And to-day the Bible, taken as a whole, is so far ahead of the best human thought, in what it says on religious and spiritual themes, that we sometimes wonder whether the world can ever come up to its standards and ideals.

I think we all must say, from this point of view, that the Bible contains revelation enough for the whole world, even if it does not contain all that God has made. It does not, according to what we read in its own pages. The words and deeds of our blessed Lord were not all recorded. St. John supposes that if they had been the world could not have contained the books. Very many of his precious sayings have not been reported to us. One or two, omitted by the evangelists, we have in the letters of St. Paul. St. Paul himself speaks of a letter of his which we do not find in our Bible. God may have said and done a great many things which were true revelations of him, yet of which we have no account. But we have



enough. Any man who knows the Bible knows that he can find all the instruction, comfort, and guidance that he needs in the Bible,—just such help as he expects from God, and such as he could not trust any one else to bring. I do not undertake to say that God never spoke to any men but those whose names are recorded in our Bible. It relieves my mind to feel that he spoke to the most ancient of the Egyptians, to the Persians, the Chaldeans, the Phœnicians, the Greeks, the Latins, and not exclusively to the Hebrews. But it is a remarkable fact, granting that we do see the true God in those old religions, that none of them has ever displaced the religion of Christ; that they each and all, when brought face to face with him, confess that he is the express image of the God whom they faintly reflect; that they are not so much destroyed as fulfilled by losing their separate forms and blending together in one blessed worship and fellowship in him. Some of the sacred books of those religions claim to be from God, and that claim entitles them to our respect; that claim leads us to examine them. And if we decline to receive them as true revelations of God it is because we miss in them certain essential things which such a revelation, intended for the salvation of men, must contain.

But if any book not claiming to be inspired, not claiming to be written under the special guidance

and control of God, comes to us and says that it is a revelation of God's mind and will towards us, we ought to cast it aside at once. From the nature of the case it cannot be what it pretends to be; for only that which comes from God can reveal God. Nature came from God, and she reveals the wisdom and power of God; the human spirit comes from God, and that reveals his justice and truth. And so any book must come from him, must be written by men whom he has inspired to write it, which reveals to us his pity, his mercy, his redeeming love. The world is full of books claiming to be only human, yet affirming that they tell us all of God which can ever be known. But all of these books together can never make a Bible for us; they are not a revelation, for they are not supernatural, not divine. The "free religionist" comes and tells us his dream, the materialist comes and tells us his, the idealist and pantheist come and tell us theirs. And they say to us, "Here is the explanation of the riddle of life and the world." We look at their portly volumes, and we ask them, "Did God give you these words to speak?" "Oh, no!" say they, "we thought them out ourselves." "Alas, then," is our answer, "they cannot be to us the light which we are seeking. They are simply human; they do not reveal God. You who write them are just as much in the dark about God as we.

We have all lost our way together ; we alike need that God himself should speak to us and tell us what is truth.

We resemble travellers on some vast plateau who have all lost their way, who cannot tell which way is east, and who are as likely to go straight away from as toward the point they wish to reach every step they take. We are not only all thus lost, but a mist has settled down upon us which hides the sky. You wise theorists, looking on us, say, "Those people yonder are sadly befogged ;" but you are just as much in the fog as we. None of us can guide the others. What we need is one whom God has guided into the truth. Only some book which he has caused to be written can be our compass. Nothing less than this can be to us the needle ever pointing to the north, which we alike need. Nothing less than a book for whose accuracy God vouches can tell us which way is toward the sunrising, where are the fixed stars by which the lost soul may find its way, in what paths we may return to our homes rather than get farther from them.

No matter, my dear friend, how brilliantly men may talk to us, or how wisely, learnedly, and profoundly. If they do not pretend to give us anything supernatural, anything divine ; if they only speak in their own name, declaring that they are not inspired any differently from all men, except

perhaps a little more, then we cut them short in the midst of their vain boasting. They cannot reveal God to us, for he has not sent them. They still leave us in the dark. Their knowledge is all human and natural. They have not seen and known God any more than we.

But now, in the midst of these confused voices of men, — of men who are in their own wisdom trying to make us understand God, — there comes to us a book whose writers take no credit to themselves. They declare that the words which they speak are not their own, but have been given to them from God. We open this volume, so different from all the others in what it claims to be, and begin to read. The writers are many of them humble men, all of them imperfect. They insist that they simply record, under a divine impulse and guidance, what they have witnessed God saying, or doing, or bringing to their knowledge. "The Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?" we read almost in the beginning; and then God declares to Adam what are to be the consequences of sin. We turn over a leaf, and again we read, "The Lord said unto Noah, come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in all this generation." Looking a little farther on, we find these words: "Now the Lord had said unto Abram, get thee out of thy country, and from thy

kindred, and from thy father's house, into a land that I will show thee." Many passages like these, showing us that God himself is claimed as speaking to men in this unique book, we pass over as we glance hastily along. When the Lord was about to destroy the cities of the plain, he said, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" and he came to his chosen servant, and told him all. "God said unto Isaac," "God said unto Jacob," we read again and again. The Lord appeared unto Moses in the burning bush, and said, "I am come down to deliver my people out of the hand of the Egyptians. . . . Come now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people. . . . And thou shalt say unto the children of Israel I AM hath sent me unto you."

All along, dear friend, we find the signs that God is revealing himself in this book, for everything takes place under his guidance and by his command. Passing on a little we come to this: "And God spake all these words saying" —saying what, dear friend? Saying the Ten Commandments, which are at the bottom of all true religion, — a perfect standard of life and worship, which Israel failed to come up to, and which even the Christian church has not yet reached. The Tabernacle was lifted up, and all its rites ordered, as the temple was afterwards built, under the

direction of God. God, in the pillar of cloud and fire, showed the people where to pitch their camp and how to continue their march. After the death of Moses the Lord spake unto Joshua saying, "Arise, go over this Jordan, thou and all this people." The miraculous, God-revealing element was conspicuous throughout his career. So, too, the Judges do not act in their own name, but claim to be God's instruments. To Eli, and to all Israel, this book says it was not Samuel who spoke, but God spoke through him. Thus was it with all the prophets, — Nathan, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, to the time of the carrying away. "Thus saith the Lord," is the announcement with which they begin their messages. They declare that God is moving before us in their words, that they are nothing in themselves, but are inspired and controlled by him. This truth is especially taught to Ezekiel, who spoke during the captivity. God reveals himself gloriously to the prophet, who is afraid to go to his fellow-captives, and then says, "I send thee to the children of Israel. . . . And thou shalt speak my words unto them. . . . Open thy mouth and eat that I give thee. And when I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me, and, lo! a roll of a book was therein."

We read on and on, fascinated by this wondrous book, which, unlike any other, declares itself to be the words of God; and at length we come to one

fairer than the children of men, through whom God, who spake to the fathers by the prophets, now speaks, and whom he calls his Son. His person, his whole history, and his teachings reveal God to men. His birth was miraculous, his daily path in life blossomed with miracles of love and pity, he rose from the dead and went into heaven in a wholly miraculous manner. This wondrous person declares that he came from God, that he is God's Son, and speaks the words of God. He says that he is wholly under a divine control; that he is inspired and led by the eternal Spirit; that he speaks the things which he has seen the Father do; that he comes to do the will of him that sent him. He goes even farther than this, — insisting that he is very God of very God, God manifested in the flesh, — saying that whoso hath seen him hath seen the Father.

Now, if God is ever to be revealed to us, saving us from sin and leading us into the truth, here certainly is the brightest promise we have yet found of his coming. This Jesus calls himself the Christ, the Saviour of the world; he declares that his words are spirit and life. He is more than inspired of God; he is God, and speaks in his own name as well as the Father's. And he did not commit his life and teachings to the idle winds. He called about him twelve men, instructed them, guided their wavering steps, told them the Spirit

of God would bring to their remembrance everything he had said unto them, sent them forth in his name, saying, "Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Thus are all the apostles, who speak to us in the Acts and Epistles, placed under the divine leadership and control, so that they too reveal God unto us in what they say and do.

And the last writing in the wondrous book has the name *Revelation* given to it, thus impressing our minds, just as we are about to lay down the volume, with the thought that it all comes from God. "Revelation, Revelation!" we exclaim; "this is what not only the last writing but all the writings in the collection claim to be." The whole is from God just as truly as any of it is from him; and the woes threatened against him who shall take anything from that last writing or add anything to it may, with equal justice, be threatened for the alteration of any other part of the book.

Such is the Bible in its claims and professions, as we see upon glancing through it. And what an interest the fact that it claims to be above everything else a revelation of God gives to it? See the ancient volume lying quietly by itself, waiting for you in your pews, in your counting-rooms and homes; translated into more than two-



hundred languages and dialects, sailing over all seas, crossing deserts and mountains, penetrating the wild forest and jungle, clutched by the soldier dying on the field of battle and by the wrecked sailor going down into his watery grave. What if it should not be true? It must be true! As surely as there is a God of love in the heavens it cannot be false. He has spoken to men somewhere, and here if anywhere. Tell us, O Book! tell us, O world! tell us, O history! tell us, O sinning and sorrowing heart! is not this indeed and in truth a record of God's words to men?

## CHAPTER V.

### THE WITNESS OF UNINSPIRED MEN.

WE have seen that such a revelation as we need, and as God desires to make to us, must, from the nature of the case, be miraculous. Any trustworthy account or record of it by men must, therefore, be necessarily made under the immediate and controlling guidance of God, — that is to say, the writers of such a Bible as we expect from God must be inspired.

Now here comes a succession of writers, reaching along in history from the Exodus to the death of the apostles, who hand us a book which we open and find to be full of the records of miracles, which they say is a revelation of God, which they declare that they have written under a divine impulse and direction. Are these writers to be believed? In order to subject them to the severest tests we will not just yet let them speak for themselves, and we will try to forget that the book which they bring us is wondrously like what any revelation of God to us must needs be. Do they bring other men, and other records and facts along with them as witnesses to their veracity? This is now our question. Dear friend, they bring so

much of this external evidence with them that I am embarrassed by the amount of it. It is largely of such a nature as to be unsuited to our present purpose. You must seek it in the learned volume. Some of it, however, I will try to give; not as an adequate presentation, but as a specimen or hint of what might be said.

Josephus first takes the stand. He was a scholar and a warrior, whom his countrymen, the Jews, disowned as a traitor at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. After the downfall of the sacred city he went with the conquerors to Rome, where he was a favorite of the emperors, and where he wrote his histories. Of such an one we must at least say that he is not a too favorable witness. Yet he, speaking for himself and all Jews, says: "We have not innumerable books which contradict each other, but only twenty-two, which contain the history of all past times, and are justly believed to be divine. Five of these belong to Moses, and contain his laws, and the history of the origin of mankind, and reach to his death. This is a period of nearly three thousand years. From the death of Moses to Artaxerxes, who, after Xerxes, reigned over the Persians, the prophets who lived after Moses wrote down the events of their times in thirteen books. The other four books contain hymns to God and precepts for men." In this enumeration the twelve minor

prophets count as one book. Josephus goes on to say: "What trust we put in these our writings is manifest by our deeds. Though so long a time has elapsed, no one has dared to add to or take from them, or make any change in them whatever. It is, as it were, inborn with every Jew, from the first origin of the nation, to consider these books as the doctrines of God, to stand by them constantly, and, if need be, cheerfully to die for them. It is no new thing to see the captives of our nation, many of them in number and at many different times, endure tortures and deaths of all kinds in the public theatres, rather than utter a word against our laws or the records which contain them." Such is one testimony that the writers of the Old Testament are to be believed. But what Josephus and his whole nation said and were ready to die for does not stand alone. Men of other nations confirm the trustworthiness of the Old Testament writers more than I can here tell.

Go into the hall of Syrian antiquities in the Louvre, when you may happen to be at Paris, and look at what is called the Moabite stone. Examine it carefully, for it has an interesting history, and there is carved on it a most valuable record. It is rock of the hardest species, broken into several pieces, which have been carefully fitted together and embedded in cement, so that the original inscription on it may be read. The existence of this

rock was made known to the French consul at Jerusalem, as you may perhaps remember. It had been found in the land of Moab, east of the Dead Sea. Hearing that it was a very ancient relic of some sort, the consul resolved to secure it. Men were sent to buy it if necessary, and to bring it away. It could not be bought of those who claimed to be its owners; and those sent for it were set upon by armed men, while they were taking an impression of characters on it, and barely escaped, one of them being severely wounded. The stone was now broken into several pieces by those who said they owned it, and they offered to sell the pieces to any person or persons who could pay the very large price which they asked for them. The French consul, to save the fragments from being scattered, to the utter loss of the inscription, at once sent to negotiate with the wild men. At length the terms were agreed upon, and the pieces secured. They were put together, and the lettering was deciphered. It was found to be nearly three thousand years old. It was a record of the wars and mighty deeds of Mesha, one of the kings of Moab. Most of these wars were with the kings of Israel, one of whom, Omri, is named.

Turning now to our Bibles, we find that Moab paid tribute to Israel from the time of David to the death of Ahab. Ahab was of the house of

Omri; and we read that Mesha, king of Moab, rebelled after Ahab died, and was successful in some of his wars against Israel. The two records run along side by side, and that of the Moabite king, carved on the rock, confirms that which we find in the Old Testament. The stone, so far as it says anything to the point, says that the writers of the books of Kings and Chronicles told the truth. They give us a record of events which actually occurred. They are trustworthy. They are to be believed.

This Moabite stone is only a hint, dear friends, of the vast progress which has, of late years, been made in confirming the records of the Bible. Something new is found almost every year in Egypt, in Assyria, or in the Holy Land. We have no other historical writings which go back so far as those of the Bible. Hence, we formerly read much in our Bibles which secular history did not confirm; and we believed it more because it met our deep want of a revelation, than because there were external evidences to its truth. But now the study of antiquity, the discovery of old monuments, enthusiastic researches in cities buried thousand of years ago, are coming to our help. It used to be said that the testimonies for the Bible were all in, and that the objections to it were continually on the increase. But the state of the case is getting to be just reversed. The objections are

all in, and they are steadily fading away before this new light which has begun to burst upon us out of the sepulchre of the ancient world. There is, we are beginning to find, a secular history confirmatory of the Bible records, written in stone or laid away in tombs, and going back to the dawn of time. Dr. Schliemann is not so surely confirming the words of the classic poets, by what he has found at Troy and Mycenæ, as others are confirming Moses and the prophets by what they are finding along the Nile, on either slope of the Jordan, and at Nineveh and Babylon.

A traveller once asked a friend, who was familiar with Egypt and its antiquities, where he could find a guide-book to that country. "Your Bible," said he. "Take that. The Bible is the best." This man had gone over the land. He had studied the picture-writing and the emblems on its obelisks and the walls of its half-buried temples. He had groped his way into pyramid, into catacomb; had seen the papyrus with its long-buried testimony coming forth. The nature of the idolatry, the forms of worship, the habits of priests, the learning and the civil and military customs of the early times had long been his study. And he knew that so much of the Bible as pertained to Egypt could be no myth, no legend, but must have been written by one who had lived in Egypt, and who described events which he had seen.

So if we go to Assyria, and there read those libraries of brick and stone which Rawlinson and others have opened to us, we find that so much of the Old Testament as has to do with Assyria is wonderfully confirmed. We find there, in cuneiform letters, either cut in the stones or stamped on the bricks, clear traditions of the flood, and of the building of Babel and its tower. Passing on to the times when the kings of Israel began to be at war with the kings of Assyria, or in alliance with them, we find the witness to the accuracy of the Bible records all that we could expect. The Bible says that Tiglath-Pileser "took Damascus and slew Rezin," at the request of Ahaz, king of Judah; and an Assyrian fragment says that he defeated Rezin, captured Damascus, and took tribute of the king of Samaria. The Bible says that the father of Sennacherib fought against Ashdod and took it, and in the annals of Assyria it is said that he made war in Southern Syria, and took Ashdod. The Bible says that Sennacherib came up against Judah, and took its fenced cities, and made Hezekiah pay tribute; the Assyrian annals say the same thing, and that too at much greater length. Of Sennacherib's second invasion, which was so fatal to him, and which the Bible so minutely describes, the Assyrian inscriptions very naturally say nothing; but there is an Egyptian version of the event, in which the destruction of



Sennacherib's host is ascribed to divine power. The Bible says that Esarhaddon "took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him away to Babylon"; Esarhaddon's own annals say that among his tributaries was "Manasseh, king of Judah."

To these notices of contemporary history, confirming Bible history just before the captivity, I might add others which bear witness that the Bible account of the captivity itself is correct. There are, among the excavated trophies at Babylon, bas-reliefs and other sculptures of figures and utensils belonging to the temple at Jerusalem, which witness to the truth of what our Bibles tell us. Even after the captivity, what Ezra and Nehemiah say of the return, and the rebuilding of the temple, is vouched for by the monuments of the conquerors. For instance, we are surprised to see how like worshippers of the true God Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes speak in their proclamations. But the cuneiform inscriptions have abundantly shown that those kings believed in one supreme God, and would naturally use such words as the Bible puts in their mouth. The Bible says that a decree was issued stopping the work on the temple, but that it was removed in the time of Darius the Persian; and on the monuments recently found Darius says, "I restored to the people the religious worship of which the Magian had

deprived them. As it was before so I arranged it."

I do not claim that I have wholly mastered this subject of external evidences. Or if I had, it is too great a subject, requiring too much careful study and collation of parallel passages in the Bible and on ancient monuments to be adequately or properly treated in this volume. Please consider what I have given as only hinting at the vast mass which might be adduced. And the most encouraging fact about this evidence is that it is all the time accumulating. Probably never was there more of it brought to light in the same length of time than has been unearthed and deciphered during the last fifty years. And from all that scholars engaged in that kind of researches say, we may infer that their discoveries have but just begun. Out of the magnificent tombs of ancient warriors and kings in the East, new witnesses are all the time leaping forth, who tell us that the writers of the Bible have given us a true record of what they themselves heard and saw.

That the Old Testament is at least as trustworthy as the New is clear from the way in which the New Testament writers speak of it. In the whole New Testament we find no intimation that anything in the Old Testament is untrue. Some of the ancient books are quoted much oftener than the others, — a few of them perhaps not even once ;

but they are all classed together, and held to be the truth, which holy men wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. In the Gospel of Matthew the Old Testament is either quoted or alluded to more than ninety times; in Luke, fifty-eight times, and in John, forty. There are nearly eighty references to it in Romans, and more than eighty in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The Revelation of St. John is so like some of the Old Testament prophecies, especially those of Daniel, as hardly to read like a New Testament book. Some critics have thought that there are in it as many as two hundred references to the ancient canon. If, therefore, the New Testament writers are to be believed, those of the Old are to be, and were inspired.

But the external testimonies to the New Testament are very abundant. We do not have to dig among the ruins of buried cities for them; the secular history of Palestine, and of the Roman Empire, are before us in clear records, and these agree with the New Testament accounts. What the four gospels say of the political status of the Jews, and of the Roman governors placed over them, the history of Rome fully confirms. And if the Gospels and Epistles, the Acts and the Revelation, are witnessed to as accurate by contemporary history, in what they have to say of the persons and common events of their times,

then it would be contrary to all reason for us to doubt them when they say that they speak unto us the words of God. It is not possible to believe that they, who are so conscientiously accurate on the lower plane of temporal things, should be regardless of truth on the higher plane of spiritual things. Since they say that they bring us a revelation from God to men, we must believe that they do, and we must concede to them the inspiration which the case demands, and which they claim. We must do this unless we go as far as those who, in the wildness of their unbelief, deny that there ever were any such persons as Christ and his apostles; who affirm that the New Testament books were simply made up and invented. But Christ and his apostles did live, or nothing is certain which took place a few hundred years ago. Christ did live, and teach, and heal, and love, and die, as the four gospels say he did; and the apostles and others did write as our Bibles say they did. Nearly all these writings, certainly the most important of them, were well known within a hundred years after the crucifixion.

The martyr Ignatius, who lived in the time of some of the apostles, was familiar with those writings. He speaks as though they were all well-known and undoubted truths, "of the descent of Christ from David—his conception by the Holy Ghost—his birth of a virgin—her name,

Mary — his manifestation by a star — his baptism by John — his appeals to the prophets — the anointing of his head with ointment — his sufferings and crucifixion under Pilate and Herod the tetrarch — his resurrection, not on the Sabbath, but on the Lord's Day — his eating and drinking with his disciples after he had risen — the mission of the apostles — their obedience to Christ — their authority over the Church — the inclusion of Sts. Peter and Paul in their number.”<sup>1</sup> What this martyr, Ignatius, says, his teacher, Polycarp, another martyr, says; and Polycarp says that he took it from the lips of St. John, whose pupil he was. And what these martyrs say other martyrs — Eusebius, Justin, Origen, Tertullian — who lived at the same time with them, or shortly after, also say. It was only a little more than a hundred years after the crucifixion that Justin wrote; and it has been well said that from his writings there “might be collected a tolerably complete account of Christ's life, in all points agreeing with that which is given in our Scriptures.” So manifest is it that Christ and his apostles were real historical persons, that the New Testament was written by the apostles and their attendants, that it was widely known and accepted as the message of God to men while they yet lived, and shortly after. They declared that they wrote and spoke by the

<sup>1</sup> Prof. George Rawlinson's “Historical Evidences.”

direction of God, and they had no selfish or worldly object to gain. They turned their back on all worldly prospects, and cheerfully accepted hardship and suffering, not refusing a martyr's death, that they might publish abroad the words God had given them. They give such words as God alone could speak, and they describe deeds and events which transcend any power not divine. Not only did they seal their testimony at the stake, or in the arena, but their successors were equally ready to die for what they had learned in their writings. Go down into the catacombs of Rome, walk through their nine-hundred miles of streets, consider that it is largely the dust of Christian martyrs which sleeps in those millions of graves, and what further need of witness can you have? There is hardly a statement in the Old Testament or the New, but again stands out in emblem, picture, or inscription, on those deep-buried tombs. The Coliseum lifts up its vast and silent walls to tell us that our Bible is from God, and that thousands of noble women, scholars, tender and delicate youths, would rather be thrown to the lions than deny it.

Not only have we the testimony of Egyptian and Assyrian monuments, and much written history, especially that of Greece and Rome, but the very geography of Palestine testifies that the Bible is what it claims to be. Many Christians, waver-

ing in their faith, have had that faith confirmed by going over Galilee and Samaria with the open Bible in hand. Unbelievers have been converted to Christ by studying the antiquities of Jerusalem and its neighborhood. If any one doubts that the Bible is a true history; that its writers were honest men; that they are what they claim to be, bearers of a revelation of God to us, let him go to the Holy Land, and there, from valley and hill, from sea and plain, from city and stream, from gardens and from graves, shall come a voice as the voice of many waters, turning his doubt into joyous faith.

This external evidence, of which I have now given you but a few hints, is so vast, dear friend, as to be positively amazing. Like the Highland chieftain, we have only to stamp our foot, and swift witnesses start up, and gather about us, out of every department of ancient research. They declare that the Bible is not a human book, but divine; that its writers are worthy of implicit belief, even when they say that they write under the guidance and control of God. These witnesses have many of them been hostile to God's kingdom on earth, have fought against his people, persecuted them, and put them to cruel deaths; but this, so far from weakening their testimony, only makes it the more unanswerable, the more convincing, a more complete and final ending of all doubt.

You remember that once, when our Lord had mercy on a poor demoniac, setting him free from the evil spirits which tormented him, even those spirits were constrained to testify that he was the Christ, the Son of the most high God. Thus it is that the monuments and annals of pagan races, and of kingdoms which have sought to displace our Lord's kingdom, nevertheless declare that he, and his words, and all whom he has inspired to speak concerning him, are God's chosen means by which he reveals himself to men. They send us such word, dear friend, as the wife of Pilate sent to him at the time of our Lord's trial. If we are tempted to reject the Bible, as the Jews were tempting Pilate to reject Jesus of Nazareth, let us remember her words. An artist has made a picture in which is given, in marvellous coloring and perspective, what he imagined her to have seen in her dream. She is painted as seeing the whole future of Christianity, — its early struggles and martyrdoms, its growing successes, its power widening through the world, its final victories, and the glory and dominion which shall crown it when Christ returns. Something like this he imagines her to have seen in the visions of her bed, by which she was moved to send to Pilate the startling message, "Have thou nothing to do with that just man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him." Like



this, my dear friend, is the message concerning our Bible which secular and even pagan history sends us to-day.

As the damsel with the spirit of divination said of Paul and Silas, "These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation," so the many witnesses which I have called up out of the dark places of heathenism say. And they speak thus not only of St. Paul and his companions, but of our blessed Lord, who is above all, and of the prophets, of Moses, of the annalists, and sweet singers of ancient Israel. "He shews unto us the way of salvation," they say, when we hear Christ declare, "Though I bare record of myself, yet my record is true." "Do nothing against those true and just men, for they show unto us the way of salvation," is still the united voice of these many witnesses, when we hear one of the apostles say, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and which our hands have handled,—that Eternal life which was with the Father, declare we unto you."

## CHAPTER VI.

### TESTIMONY OF THE PROPHECIES.

WE, in the last chapter, looked at the testimonies to the truth of the Bible with which history abounds. The monuments and inscriptions of the buried past, and secular historians who were contemporary with the writers of the Bible, certify to the accuracy of the Bible records. They tell us that what we read in our Sacred Book is worthy of implicit belief. Not only does God desire to reveal himself to us, and not only has he power to make such a revelation, and not only must the men who receive and write out this revelation be inspired of God to do it, but here we have a book which claims that it is a revelation of God to us, and whose writers claim to be inspired. The first of these claims, that the Bible is God's message to us, was sufficiently considered in the third chapter; nor need the claim of the writers of the Bible, that they were inspired to write accurately what they wrote, now detain us long. We saw in the fourth chapter that from the nature of the case they must be inspired in order to be equal to their work, and the secular monuments and history

say that they should be believed if they claim that they wrote by inspiration of God.

That they do make this claim is obvious on almost every page of the Bible. Moses and the prophets declared that they spake God's words to the people, and that in what they wrote down God guided and kept them. This claim of the Old Testament writers is not only conceded, but everywhere insisted upon, in the New. St. Paul, writing to Timothy, says, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Not less decisive than these words are those of Peter, where he says, referring to the Hebrew Scriptures, "The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Whenever the first preachers of Christ went among the scattered Jews, they began with the Old Testament as an accepted basis of truth, on which they and their hearers could stand together. And in this custom they but followed the example of Christ. He nowhere questioned the truth of the Old Testament; he continually reasoned out of it; he gave to its words a diviner meaning than many to whom he spoke had done; he said, in his Sermon on the Mount, that he came not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil.

Christ wrote nothing himself. But he claimed to be far above that plane of inspiration on which the writers of the Bible stood. He was God dwelling in the flesh and speaking to men. He said that no man had seen God at any time, but that he, who dwelt in the bosom of God, had declared him. He declared not only that he spoke the truth, but that he was the truth. Unto Pilate he said, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth." And to another, who doubted who he was, he said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father, and how sayest thou, then, show us the Father?" Such was the supreme claim which Christ made for himself; and not only this, but he made promises of special guidance to those who should record his words. Here is what he says, "These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." This was the promise, and the writers of the gospels and the epistles everywhere assume that it was fulfilled to each one of them. Our attention is again and again called to this fact. The apostles claimed so to speak the words of God that whosoever despised them despised not men but God.

"I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you," said St. Paul to the Corinthians. The form in which he began most of his letters, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God," shows that he claimed to be specially authorized to speak God's words to men. His language covers the whole case, both for himself, and all whom Christ commissioned, where he says, "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory, which none of the princes of this world knew, . . . but God hath revealed them unto us by his spirit. . . . We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God, that we might know the things which are freely given to us of God; which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth . . . for who hath known the mind of the Lord? but we have the mind of Christ." Thus explicitly do the writers of the Bible claim that they bring us a revelation of God, and that they give it to us in words which God has taught them. And we saw, in the last chapter, that the voice of antiquity, of contemporary history, the very geography of Palestine, and the lives and deaths of those who claimed to come from God, all declare that their claim cannot be doubted, but that they are God's true and faithful

witnesses to us. And we open the volume, and we find it, as we should expect to find a true revelation of God, — full of the supernatural, of miracles, of the very footprints and handiwork of God himself.

But there is one proof that the Bible is God's book which I now wish especially to point out, and that is the fulfilment of prophecy. Men may guess at the future with more or less probability, but they cannot positively declare it. They may put together causes and influences which are at work on the plane of the finite, and confidently foretell what results will follow. But when they rise to the infinite, to events which neither men nor nature, but God alone must bring to pass, they know not anything, — not what shall be on the morrow, or what an hour may bring forth. When, therefore, we read in our Bible that God made known what he would do some time in the remote future, and find that he did as was so long before predicted that he would, we must admit that the Bible is God's book; especially must we admit this when we find that not one prophecy, nor two, but many, making a large part of the volume, came true ages or centuries after they were made.

Observe that I now speak only of fulfilled prophecies, not of the unfulfilled. On this wide and uncertain sea I do not propose to embark. Nor

do I undertake to make a list of the prophecies which have been clearly fulfilled. Possibly they are more, possibly less than I might think. No great rebellion or war takes place, and no statesman rises up to change the relations of states and kingdoms, but some will see in it the fulfilment of ancient prophecy. They may see rightly at times, but they do not always agree, they change their views; the same prophecy has been applied to many different persons or events. In regard to the prophecies which are clearly unfulfilled, as those pertaining to the second coming of our Lord, I have nothing to say. It is not for me to say just when or just how they will be fulfilled. I know that they tell us of a wondrous and glorious reappearing, and with that I comfort my heart. I only wait and watch, leaving God to be his own interpreter. Some prophecies may be having their fulfilment in the present, as it is certain that others point on into the future; but here, amid this confusion and uncertainty, is no ground on which to put an argument for the divine origin of the Bible. I go back, therefore, from all this to those prophecies which have already had their clear and final fulfilment; whose voice, foretelling what should be in the ages to come, has been distinctly responded to by the voice of history.

First to be noticed among these are those early prophecies which relate to the calling, the growth

and triumph, the captivity, the recall and the dispersion of the Jewish people. It was more than four hundred and fifty years before Joshua led Israel into Canaan that God came to Abraham, who was then at Bethel, and said to him, "Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land, in the length of it, and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee." Here now is a distinct prophecy that Abraham's descendants should be very numerous, and that they should for a long time have possession of Canaan. Going down the stream of time nearly five hundred years, we find that the Israelites have passed over Jordan, that they have driven out the Canaanites, and that it is said, "These are the countries which the children of Israel inherited in the land of Canaan, which Eleazer the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel, distributed for inheritance to them." Such is the record. All, from beginning to end, has taken place under God's ordering, and by his help, and in fulfilment of what he foretold to Abram, his



friend. We do not see how it is possible for history to re-echo more surely the voice of prophecy; and since it is a work of omniscience thus to foretell the future, the Bible must be God's book.

Take next the prophecy concerning the bondage in Egypt. God said unto Abram: "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years: and also that nation whom they shall serve will I judge, and afterwards shall they come out with great substance." Was this prophecy fulfilled? Look forward two hundred years, and you read this historical record: "And the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, and their little ones, and their wives in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him. And they took their cattle and their goods, which they had gotten in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob and all his seed with him." Pass on a little farther, and you read this: "Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph; and he said: "The children of Israel are more and mightier than we. Come on, let us deal wisely with them. . . . Therefore did they set over them taskmasters, to afflict them with their burdens." Still passing on two hundred years, you find this bit of history: "And Moses stretched forth his hand

over the sea. . . . And the waters returned, and covered the chariots and the horsemen, and all the hosts of Pharaoh. . . . But the children of Israel walked upon dry land. . . . And Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians." Thus did the pen of history, in the hand of Moses, write down the fulfilment of the prophecy to Abram, — the going down, all the oppression, and the mighty deliverance.

How distinctly God has put his own mark on the Bible we shall again see if we read the prophecy which he put into the mouth of Balaam, who came to curse Israel, but was made to bless him. That prophecy was: "It shall be said of Jacob, and of Israel, what hath God wrought? Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain." Was here a foretelling of the future such as God alone could do? Go forward to the time of David and Solomon, and you shall see. Nearly six hundred years pass away, and in the victories of David, in the building of the temple, in the glory and wisdom which awoke the wonder of the Queen of Sheba, you find all that was told so long before coming to pass. You read the prophecy and the history, and you say: "This is not a human book, — this book is from God."

Not only the growth, but the falling apart and decay of Israel were prophesied long before they came. The Lord said to Moses: "Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up and go after the gods of the strangers of the land, and will forsake me, and break my covenant. Then my anger shall be kindled against them, and I will forsake them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them. Look forward five hundred years, and read the history of Israel from the time the nation was divided until the captivity at Babylon, and you see how true that early prophecy was. No man could have made it. Reasoning from cause to effect, looking at what God had done for Israel and was yet to do, we should have said that they could not fall away and be destroyed. The prediction was just contrary to all the probabilities in the case, yet it was terribly fulfilled.

It would take too much time even to point out the prophecies of the carrying away to Babylon, and of the return. They began to be uttered many years before the events took place, and you know how literally they came true. When you find what Isaiah and Jeremiah foretold coming to pass in the time of Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, you are forced to recognize Him who sees the end from the beginning.

Turning now to another class of prophecies, relating to cities and nations, how do you account for the fact that their truth is so confirmed by history? How often men have predicted the decay of great cities, as London, Paris, New York, Boston, — yet those cities flourish on! Not so, however, when God opens his mouth. He speaks, and it is done. Perhaps you have travelled in the East; have sat amid the ruins of Tyre. If so, ask yourself whether it was man or God who said, twenty-five hundred years ago: “They shall be sorely pained at the report of Tyre. . . . Is this your joyous city whose antiquity is of ancient days? The Lord of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honorable of the earth.”

If you have gone through the land of Egypt, have you not been obliged to own that it was not man, but God, who, two thousand years ago, said: “The daughter of Egypt shall be confounded; she shall be delivered into the hand of the people of the North. Behold, I will punish the multitude of the land of No, and Pharaoh, and Egypt, with their gods and their kings.”

Perhaps no one of you has visited the site of ancient Babylon. It was so destroyed, and wasted, and buried out of sight long ago that men were uncertain where it stood. Yet centuries before this wasting began, when all things seemed

to favor the continuance of its power and glory, Jeremiah said of it: "Because of the wrath of the Lord it shall not be inhabited, but it shall be wholly desolate; every one that goeth by Babylon shall be astonished, and hiss at all her plagues." Think you, as you see modern engineers bringing the ruins of Babylon out into the light, that Jeremiah was mistaken in saying that the words he spoke were not his own; but words which God gave him to speak? You know that he could not be mistaken. He did speak and write the counsel of God.

Read the history of the city of Jerusalem,—its whole history, if you would see how it fulfils early prophecies; read its history since our Lord came in the flesh, and see how it fulfils his sad words. "He beheld the city and wept over it, saying. . . . the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee, and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another." You know how all this came true within a generation, so that the disciples had need to heed their Lord's words as to what they should do when they saw Jerusalem compassed with armies. Having read the sorrowful words of the Master, and then seeing how literally history fulfilled them all, you can but say,

as some said while he was in the flesh: "This is the Son of God: never man spake like this man."

Turn again to the Messianic prophecies, which began in the garden of Eden and reached all through the Old Testament times. The promise was made to Eve that a deliverer should come. It was repeated to Abraham. Moses called special attention to it. It appears in the prophecy of Balaam; Joshua and the law of Canaan were types of Christ. As we get further on we come to minute descriptions of the person and sufferings and reign of the Messiah. What but the power of Christ in the earth has ever answered to the words of the second Psalm? In the twenty-second Psalm you read: "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." And then again, in the accounts of our Lord's crucifixion you read that the soldiers divided his garments among them by lot. Is this man's book, dear friend? No, it is God's. In the hundred and tenth Psalm you find David saying: "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand until I make thy foes thy footstool." These words could not possibly be true of any human ruler, but they are fulfilled in Jesus Christ, who is set down at the right hand of the majesty on high, — principalities and powers being subject unto him. Seven hundred years before Christ, Isaiah wrote the fifty-third chapter of his prophecy. What he then foretold has never come true but

once, and it has been all fulfilled in our Lord Jesus Christ. He was despised and rejected of men; he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. The Lord did lay on him the iniquity of us all, and he was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and poured out his soul unto death. Verily, these were the true sayings of God, which he took and gave unto his servant, whom he sent to speak of things which should so long after come to pass.

But perhaps you say that the Jewish nation, to whom these prophecies came, regard them as yet unfulfilled. They do so regard them; and in this there is nothing against our argument, but only the fulfilment of another ancient prophecy. Christ came as foretold, but the Jews did not see him, for there was a veil on their heart. They fulfilled the darkest of the prophecies concerning themselves; nay, they made good what was foretold of Christ himself, by rejecting and mocking and crucifying him. For this blindness and hard-heartedness God scattered them, as we now see, among the nations, — according to what he said unto them of old, by his servants, the prophets.

In the sixty-second chapter of Isaiah we read: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the weak; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted: to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."

And in the fourth chapter of Luke we read that Christ, near the beginning of his ministry, quoted these words to the people of Nazareth in the synagogue, on the Sabbath, and said: "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." The prophet Joel, writing nearly a thousand years before the day of Pentecost, said: "And it shall come to pass that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy; your old men shall dream dreams; your young men shall see visions." We pass on down the stream of time: and after our Lord's ascension at Jerusalem, where the multitudes are astonished to hear the apostles speak with tongues, we find Peter quoting the ancient prophecy, and saying: "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." On through apostolic history, through the labors of St. Paul we go, and at almost every step, in the giving of the gospel to the Gentiles; in the trials, persecution, and martyrdom of the first Christians, we find some ancient prophecy coming true. We read history and prophecy side by side, and the more we read the more we wonder, and the more we wonder the more does our sound and unbiased reason point us heavenward, saying unto us, "Behold your God!"

In his history of the literature of Europe, Henry Hallam, speaking of the fact that the Bible was the first book printed after the invention of printing,



says : " We see in imagination this venerable and splendid volume leading the crowded myriads of its followers, and imploring, as it were, a blessing on the new art, by dedicating its first fruits to the service of heaven." Yes, my dear friend ; and as that mighty book, still leading on all other books, draws near to us to-day, we see around it, and all over and through it, a brightness which is not of this world ; and in the eager words of the Psalm we say : " Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in."

## CHAPTER VII.

### WHAT THE BIBLE HAS DONE.

I SPOKE, in the last chapter, of some of the prophecies of the Bible, and of the marvellous way in which they have been fulfilled. In this chapter I wish to allude to the history of the Bible in the world, — to what it has done and is still doing among men, — which is of so wonderful a character as to exalt it far above any or all other books.

Egypt is a country in which it rarely rains. Yet the Nile is ever there, with its annual floods, making the land like a garden; nor is the mystery solved till its sources, the great lakes lying near the equator, are taken into the account. So the Bible has flowed through history, a beneficent and fertilizing stream, and we can explain it only as we come to its sources, which are under the throne of God.

No doubt there were other Hebrew books in ancient times. Some of them are mentioned in our Bible. Some of them, the Apocryphal books, are often seen in Bibles, put there by order of one of the later councils of the Romish Church, though without warrant either from the New Testament

or the Old. Their inferiority to the more generally accepted canon shows them to be wholly out of place.

There were in the times of the apostles, or soon after, many writings on the subjects of which they treated. Some of those writings, pretended gospels and epistles, are still preserved as curiosities. But they have no influence, no power; they would have been forgotten long ago but for their connection with the Bible. The question arises, Why has that mass of ancient writings so generally perished, while the Bible not only survives them all, but to-day has more freshness and power than it ever before had? The writers of the Bible were not so superior to all about them, in genius and culture, as to account for this vast difference. Most of them were wholly plain and unlettered men. Yet the writings of these men still lead the best thought of the world. You can explain their survival, and their wondrous energy, all the time increasing, in no other way so well as by admitting that God is with them, and speaks through them as through no other writings. Grant that they are his revelation, and you know why they still live and move the world.

This final resort to God to account for the continuance and power of the Bible, is made more necessary when we look at the Hebrew nation as compared with those about it. Except for brief

periods, chiefly in the times of Joshua and David, it was not a conquering nation. It was in subjection to the mighty kingdoms near it during most of the immense period along through which the Bible was written. Its whole territory was in itself an insignificant patch of country. What were its cities, its learning, its arts, its achievements, and glory, to those of Egypt and Assyria? If the Bible were a human book we should expect its authorship to be Egyptian, Babylonian, or Persian. But it comes from the small and oft-ravaged Palestine. Here is a mystery which we can solve in but one way. If the Bible were merely a human book it ought to come from the great centres of learning and renown. That it comes from Palestine is a witness to its divine authorship; for God chooses the weak things to confound the mighty, and the foolish things to confound the wise.

If we look farther out on these countries whose early literature has survived, — such countries as India, Greece, Italy, — we find our argument growing stronger and stronger. Take the great classics, Homer, Plato, Aristotle, Thucydides, Plutarch, Virgil, Cicero, Seneca, Tacitus. How much more influence than the writers of the Bible they should to-day have if all were alike as to inspiration. In the common use of the word, some of the classic writers were more inspired than the Biblical. They had greater natural genius, could think more

profoundly and connectedly, could put their thoughts into more elegant forms of words. Yet what is the influence of them all to-day, compared with that of the Bible alone? How many of them would continue to be read but for the Bible? The Bible has been printed in all known languages of the world,—they in how few! Copies of the Bible are sown broadcast by the million; they are limited to a few choice libraries. And though the Bible is the most popular of books, it is more studied than any other by the intellectual leaders of our day. Is there any way but one in which you can account for this difference? God is in the book which unlettered men of a downtrodden race wrote. Nothing short of this could make it outlive the literature of Egypt, of Nineveh. It is a revelation of God, and therefore it to-day sways the world while the books of the proud Greek or Roman writers are comparatively powerless.

Another fact in regard to the history of the Bible, which points to its divine authorship, is the vast mass of literature to which it has given rise. Not a little of this literature is in the form of attacks upon the Bible. But what other book have unbelievers ever thought it worth their while so to assail? Almost all human books are challenged and criticised more or less when they first come forth from the press: but how soon the mind of the world concerning them is made up, and they

either take their place among standard works or are forgotten! Not so the Bible. Its enemies have fought against it thousands of years, nor are they yet agreed to let it alone. It is as formidable an object of attack as ever. It comes forth fresher and stronger out of every conflict. No other book, not all other books put together, have provoked so much criticism, — have died under the blows of the assailants after a little, or have ceased to provoke assaults. How do you account for this difference? Can you account for it save by admitting that the Bible has a divine life, which cannot be destroyed?

On the other hand, look at the books which have been written in defense of the Bible, or to expound and illustrate its teachings. What mighty libraries there are of them! They began to multiply soon after the apostles died. Think of all the works of the Greek and Latin fathers, — how they marshalled their huge volumes at Alexandria, at Constantinople, at Rome! The commentaries on the Bible, in all languages, and upon its smallest texts and words, would, if gathered together, be a countless host. On each Lord's Day, and on all days in many places, what an army of preachers are speaking to the people out of the Bible; and this has been so for more than fifteen centuries; and to all this we must add the studies of the Sunday School and home, the religious magazine,

newspaper, and review. And what are these to the great and ancient universities, with their thousands of Bible scholars all the time at work upon it, or on something nearly related to it. Go into the greatest libraries of Germany, of France, of England, of this country. Look at one small volume, perhaps lying on a table in the midst. Consider that that one small book has called into being a large part of the vast collections around it. Think of this, and remember that all other books together have not had such creative power, and then say whose work the Bible is. It cannot be man's; it must be God's own book. Look also at the mass of literature which does not pretend to be Biblical or even religious, and see how that even, if it is good for anything, honors the Bible, and is full of thoughts and expressions borrowed from it. This book, which some would shut up, wholly banish from the schools in which our children are taught, was familiar to Shakespeare, as his works often and most strikingly show. It helped the thought and style of Milton, and gave him the theme of the grandest modern epic. Sir Walter Scott on his deathbed said, "There is but one book, — the Bible." Read not only Jeremy Taylor and John Bunyan, but Macaulay, Carlyle, the greatest orators, poets, philosophers, wherever the English language has been spoken since the Bible was translated into our tongue, and see what the

Bible has done for them. They are glad to speak their greatest thoughts, and point their sublimest sentences with its words. What other book has had such power over men in the higher departments of thinking and of letters? Certainly no other. In this particular the Bible stands absolutely alone. And how do you explain the wonder? You cannot explain it but by admitting that the author of the Bible is God. It alone reveals him to men. His life is in it, quickening into life all his children to whom it comes.

Not only does the life of the Bible throb in all good literature, but think what it has done for the noblest of the arts. Oh, that the ancient sculptors had known the Bible! What a dignity it would have given to their genius, cramped as they were by their pagan mythology. Painting bloomed out as never before when the Bible was brought into the world of art. To it we owe the Madonnas of Raphael, ending with that most wonderful of pictures, the Sistine Madonna. His cartoons are due to the miracles of Christ. The Transfiguration kindled his genius as nothing in common history ever did. And he is but one of the many whom the Bible has thus awaked. There is hardly a scene or event of marked character, from Genesis to Revelation, but some artist has wrought it into living and glowing forms. Go through the great galleries, where the works of the masters are



treasured, and see what space is given to the Bible. It has been the inspiration, the guide, the foster-mother of art. In this no other book, nor all others, can compare with it. The magic pencil drops from the hand of art, and her works grow tame and cheap, when she turns from the Bible. Think of this, dear friends, and let it help you measure the gulf which separates the Bible from all human books. As of painting, so of music. Her noblest periods have been those in which she has drawn her subjects from the Bible; her productions begin to grow weak and frivolous as soon as she turns to secular themes. We could not have had the immortal works of Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, but for the Bible. Now, is there not something wonderful in this? Think how many books have been written by famous geniuses; yet the highest glory of music, of painting, of human letters, is due not to these, but to one small book, largely the work of humble men, which is older than the oldest of them, and which lives on while they perish,—all the time growing more fresh and powerful. Say that the Bible is God's book, and you account for this marvellous fact. The history of the Bible as thus far traced, and in contrast with other books, requires that we should look on it as a divine revelation.

But we have only begun this historic survey,

dear friend. Consider the blessed transforming power which the Bible has everywhere shown in human society. It went through the length and breadth of the Roman Empire, in the hands and lives and on the lips of the first Christians. You know how mighty it was to the pulling down of strongholds. The effects it produced everywhere filled heathen minds with wonder. The polished Pliny, writing to his master Trajan, from Bithynia, said that the Christians "met on a stated day before it was light, and addressed a form of prayer to Christ as to a divinity, binding themselves by a solemn oath; not for any wicked purpose, but never to commit any fraud, theft, or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called on to deliver it." This movement, which found its source in the Bible, soon became dangerous to the schemes of the emperors, and bloody and fiery persecution followed. But those believers in the words of Christ and the apostles could not be conquered. Their blood was a mighty seed. The empire itself became Christian a few generations after. Thus did the Bible once lift almost the whole world into a nobler and purer life. And how soon those old races sank back to their former level when the Bible was taken away! We see them to-day, in many respects worse than when Christ came, because their ambitious priesthood and rulers took

from them the key of knowledge ; and still, again, they are beginning to rise to purity where that key, the Bible, in the hands and hearts of missionaries, has been restored to them. Look on the results as seen now and in the past, and remembering that a tree is known by its fruits, ask yourself if this is not a tree which God has planted and made strong for himself? Most certainly it is, or there would be something else somewhere in the world worthy to be compared with it, as now there is not.

Think of the barbarous condition of Northern Europe in the time of Julius Cæsar. When he invaded England that country was overrun with tribes of hostile and warring savages. The religion of the Druids, with its horrid and bloody rites, held sway. When the Bible came, some centuries later, there still were heathen temples where Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's Cathedral now stand. There, and on the continent hard by, the people lived in caves, in wretched huts of mud and sticks, but scantily clad in the skins of beasts, their implements few and rude. Such was the state of things which met the first Christian missionaries to those wilds. But they began to tell, beneath spreading trees or wherever any would listen to them, the story of that divine coming and speaking to men which the Bible records. Their teaching, and that of their successors, began to

awake, in the souls about them, a divine life which had been hitherto dead. New ideas began to dawn upon those souls, new hopes and longings were kindled in them. What the law, the power, the grandeur of Rome could not do the Bible did. It came in the hands of men who had no selfish object to gain, in whom it had awakened a love which could make them die for the good of other men, and immediately the transformation began. The process has been at times slow, tortuous, now doubling and now redoubling its course, where the spirit and teaching of the Bible have been laid aside or overborne; but it has, on the whole, gone forward and upward, reaching higher and higher terraces, till now we behold, in those once degraded countries, some of the brightest proofs of the goodness and nobleness and greatness of which human nature is capable. Go to England to-day, and ask her what has made her what she is, and she will point you to the Bible: *that*, entering into her society, her schools, her literature, her institutions, her government and laws, has raised her from her savage state to what she now is. And she will not only point you to the Bible, but she will say, with a mighty emphasis, that no human book could have done so much for her, and that the Bible has been able to do it, only because it is the message of God to her, as it is to all men.

I wish I could here bring another witness, dear friend, from the history of the native races in this land. But I cannot, save in a very limited way. Even the Pilgrims at Plymouth were not wholly disinterested; certainly the Puritans of Boston were not. They came less as missionaries than to make a place for themselves. I do not forget Eliot's Indian Bible, and his work at Natick, which bore such good fruit. There are good men and women among us now, toiling and praying for the conversion of the Indians; nor have they toiled in vain, as the story of some Christian tribes may show. But it is still our shame that the most self-sacrificing missionaries the Indians of our country have ever had were the French Jesuits, who went into the wilderness by way of Quebec and Montreal, along the lakes, and down the Mississippi. However unwise or fanatical they were, this devotion has left a mark which English rule has not yet worn out. The Bible has not raised up the Indians in our borders for the sufficient reason that we have not, from the first and all along, given it to them out of a pure and unselfish love. Our treatment of them has made it a ghastly mockery when reached out to them by our hands. It looks very much as though we had lost our last chance of saving them. We cannot give them the Bible; they must receive it from nations who have it in their heart. Let it come to them from hands unstained with their own blood, — from

true and loving hands, whose love and truth have been clearly proved, — and then we shall see if the Bible does not show itself to be, among our Indian tribes, what it has elsewhere been, the wisdom of God and the power of God.

Why should it not do for them what it did for the Sandwich Islanders, who savagely murdered the first visitors to their shores? Roving and fighting cannibals less than a century ago, to-day a Christian nation! And the Bible tells you why. That kindled and fanned the spark which has been to them the light of life. Can anything be too hard for a book which Christianized the island of Madagascar so recently? Take that island as it was at the beginning of the century, and as it is now; look on that picture and then on this, while you hear them say that the Bible has changed them from a multitude of savages to a Christian people, and ask yourself whence came this wonderful book? Can it be any one's, save His with whom nothing is impossible? As the Bible went to the Sandwich Islands and to Madagascar, finding them dark and cruel places and filling them with light and love, so it has gone and is still going to other islands of the deep and to the oldest civilizations of the East. I cannot here tell you the story of the Fiji Islands, whose very name has been with us a synonym of all that is wild, treacherous, and brutal. Such was their character fifty years ago. They hunted and

ate one another as we do our forest game. There was no baseness, no fury or lust of wild beasts of which they were not guilty, and proud to make it their boast. It is hard for us to realize how utterly all that has been changed. The Bible went to those devourers of one another early in this century, carried to them by those devoted men, Williams and Hunt; and to-day guide-books of the Fiji Islands, for the use of persons travelling in search of knowledge or pleasure, are published. You look on that picture and then on this, tracing the wondrous change to the Bible, and you say: "This is not man's doing; what hath God wrought with his own all-conquering book!"

In 1848 Dr. John Geddie went to the New Hebrides; and he died in 1872, only twenty-four years later. Yet in the church where he preached there has just been placed a tablet, with this inscription:—

"When he came here,  
There were no Christians;  
When he went away,  
There were no heathens."

I should be glad to give more of these proofs, drawn from the history of the Bible in the world, that God is with it, and in it; but I must keep within my limit.

I should do wrong not to allude to the story of the mutineers of the ship "Bounty," who settled on

Pitcairn's Island in the Southwest Pacific. This ship had been at Tahiti Island for several months, gathering slips of the bread-fruit tree, which were to be transplanted in the West Indies. The vicious and lazy sailors found such delights at Tahiti that they did not wish to quit it; went on board in a sullen mood, and soon after, on some provocation, mutinied. All but the mutineers were put out of the ship into an open boat, with a little food and water, and then the ship sailed back to Tahiti. But being afraid to stay there, where vessels often came, they again went on board, with several of the islanders, and sailed away in search of a home. The home which they finally chose was Pitcairn's Island. They ran the ship ashore, took out of it what they could carry away, and then burnt it to the water. On this island, where nature had food and a delicious climate for them, they hid themselves in a high, beautiful valley, and there quarrelled and fought till they were all dead but one. This one found himself at the head of a colony of less than twenty persons, most of them women and children. Of course, fighting then ceased. With quiet came reflection, and with this the sense of sin. The one surviving mutineer bethought him of a Bible which had been saved from the ship. He found it, and read it, and began to pray over it, till his murderous soul turned in penitence to God. The poor creatures



about him saw the wondrous change. He had become another man; and they were full of joy at the change, for now their lives were safe. He began morning and evening prayers, and had public worship on Lord's Days, all of which the whole colony attended as one family. The children grew up, families were founded, all vice came to an end; the people were in sympathy with their leader, and like him took their rules of life from the Bible. The result was marvellous. Years after, when the colony had grown to nearly a hundred persons, and had become known, visitors were astonished at what they saw. It seemed to them the very paradise of God, — so truthful, so honest, so peaceful, so industrious, so gentle and pure and holy were all its members. One bad man from near Boston, visiting them and seeking to do them harm, was warned of his wickedness by them, and turned into a devout Christian through their efforts. The small island becoming too strait for them they were persuaded to go back to Tahiti, which the older of them still remembered, where was plenty of room. But the vices and sins which they there saw so shocked them that they refused to stay, and went again to Pitcairn, saying they would rather their bodies should starve than their souls be lost; that their colony should become extinct than that it should fall back into the corruption it had once escaped.

I need not speak of their story farther. What that one Bible did, as now shown, is enough for my purpose. All merely human books could not have done what it accomplished. The story shows us that none are so base but the Bible can lift them to purity and peace, where they let it come into their hearts. It can change darkness to light, chaos to order, hatred to love, sin to holiness before God. When you bring me another book which has done what the Pitcairn Bible did, and which is wholly the work of man, I may admit that the Bible can be ranked with other books; but until you do this, I am forced to insist that the Bible came down to men from God, or it could not so lift them up to God. Its history, the story of its triumphs for four thousand years, the wonderful and blessed transformations it has wrought in all the earth, are the darkest riddle of the ages if it be but human. But admit that it is from God, and all is plain.

As the thunder spoke in the sky above our Lord's head, saying, "This is the Son of God," so a great voice out of all the past, and from the ends of the world, to-day speaks, saying, "This is that revelation of God, full of the renewing life of God, which was to come into the world. We cannot doubt it any more than Andrew doubted that Jesus was the Christ when he ran to tell his own brother Simon, or Philip when he found Nathaniel

under the fig-tree. As the woman of Samaria believed that Jesus was the Messiah, when she heard him tell her all that she ever did, so we, looking at the Bible, seeing it coming down the ages, leading captivity captive, walking over the graves of its assailants, say, "This is that true word of God, shining as a light in dark places, to which we do well to take heed." If you are against the Bible, and its divine Author, and the Saviour who comes in it, I pray you, "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry with you, and you perish in the way with him when his wrath is kindled but a little." But if you have committed your soul in well-doing to him, whose kingdom the Bible is setting up in all the earth, then work and wait in joyous hope; for the end of all things, which is at hand, is but the ending of every form of violence and ungodliness among men, and the beginning of a glory which shall bring heaven to earth and raise earth to heaven.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS OF MAN.

IF I were a lawyer in a civil court, pleading for the proposition that our Bible is God's message to men, it seems to me that I might here be content to let the jury take the case. I have shown that the Bible has been doubted no more seriously than many other truths which are axiomatic, self-evident, necessary. Our idea of God is such that we know he must desire to reveal himself to us, in order that he may save us from our miseries and sins. This he can do, the fabric of natural law not shutting him away from us, inasmuch as he made nature, and made it in view of what he would desire to do for us. Any revelation from him is, therefore, from the nature of the case, miraculous; and a book which had in it no record of miracles could not be God's word. But a history of miracles must necessarily be beyond the reach of created minds: hence the need of special inspiration; that is to say, God must himself guide and control those who write out his revelations for the use of others. And then, not only are these expectations and conditions met in our Bible, but it claims to be a divine revelation, and secular history

and antiquities confirm this claim. Besides all this, the fulfilment of prophecies which we find in the Bible proves it to be divine, and it has had a career in the world which we can account for only on the ground that it is God's book.

But these evidences, convincing as they might be in a court of law, are for the most part merely external, — what various persons and things and ideas witness concerning the Bible : we have not as yet looked at the drift and meaning of the book itself. We have seen the outside of the building, have looked into its vestibule, have heard echoes of the music and worship inside ; and if these show that it can be none other than the house of God, what must our impressions be as we pass in through the portals ; as we stand under its high arches ; as we tread its solemn aisles ? All true preaching is of the very essence of these internal evidences ; you will therefore only expect me to hint at some of the more obvious of them, falling farther short of what might be said in this part of my subject than in what has gone before. I will limit myself, in the chapters to come, to what the Bible has to say of man, of God, of the moral order of the world, and of deliverance from evil and sin.

If we begin with man, and inquire what the Bible has to say about him, we find it confirming, and widening, and deepening our natural knowledge, in a way that no human book has ever done.

What is man? Is he body or spirit? Does our whole humanity come out of the flesh; or does it simply use the flesh for a little while? Is our higher nature from beneath, or is it from above and made to be the lower nature's lord? The answer to this question which we bring with us into life, which is embedded among the very roots of our being, cannot be mistaken. Our own souls tell us that in the things which go to make us men or women we are not related to the clod. Not only are we above the worm and all beasts and creeping things, but we belong to a wholly distinct order of life. You may trace resemblances of physical structure and of natural instinct between us and the lower animals, but there is that in us which there is not in them. The appearance of anything like mind or soul in them does not lift them to our plane. We have personality as they have not. That in us which we mean when we use the pronoun *I* is not in them. We are spiritual, not material. We make use of matter, but are not of it. No speculations of natural science will ever beat this faith out of us. It may be confused, blinded, unable to answer the questions of the materialist, but it cannot be destroyed.

That we came down from the Father of lights, and are essentially spiritual, is to us more sure than anything else. It is the foundation of all our other knowledge. Make us doubt this, and we

must refuse to believe anything. Such is the soul's own testimony that it is itself a spark out of the infinite and divine flame. This is what the human consciousness says, not only where the Bible has gone, but where it has not gone. Men must be sunk into the very grave by their ignorance, their vice, their bondage to the lower nature, who do not insist on this. Raise them up, quicken them, kindle their inner nature into life, and that they are essentially spiritual and from above, is one of the first truths which will leap forth and shine and cry out within them. Any book which does not recognize this peculiarity in them, or which tries to explain it away, their first impulse is to cast from them with horror. It is the serpent invading their Eden, whispering its temptations into their ear, planting its snare by the very tree of life. It may be more subtle than any other beast of the field, but souls which are awake to their worth will say to it, "We may not eat what you offer us;" nor will they be beguiled from that answer till made false to themselves.

But our Bible brings us no such temptation; it plants no such snare. It does not come to the lower nature in us, but to the higher, — to what is best, and not to what is worst. It tells us that our first and most awful impression of man, of ourselves, is wholly right. We are spirits; we are from above. What is graven on the soul,

what all men naturally believe, what flames out in our consciousness more, the more we are awake, that the Bible confirms; that the Bible clears up, widens, deepens, makes more solemn and impressive to us than it was before? As soon as you look into this book you find it declaring that man is a spirit, and that he is of divine origin. It recognizes his frailty, his bondage to death; it calls him a worm, the grass of the field, the flower that is cut off. But all this is said with reference to the fleshly nature, which is no part of the real and imperishable man. When we come to the *I*, the *myself*, which our inmost thought reveals to us, the voice of the best-trained consciousness is not so loud and clear as that of the Bible. On its first page we find these words: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them." This account of the creation of man in the first of Genesis is repeated in the second chapter in such a way as more especially to emphasize his spiritual nature. There we read: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life,



and man became a living soul." God imparted of his own life, that is, to man. He was made to live in a wholly different way from the lower orders of creatures. God did not breathe his breath into them, but the waters and the earth at his word brought them forth. Other creatures were made by the operation of nature; but man was an inbreathed spirit, — a living soul, a spark out of God's own life, — so that he could be truly said to be made in the image of God. Thus is our necessary faith in the original dignity and inherent worth of man wholly confirmed.

Not only is our natural self-knowledge confirmed, but its sphere is widened, and the source of our consciousness of a spiritual nature is revealed. It is because we are God's children that we have in us the ideas of beauty, of order, of righteousness, and are blessed only as we find those ideas realized. Our wretchedness in a world of disorder, and while conscious of our own faults, is a witness to the spirit in us which is God's child. The Bible accounts for this higher nature of man, and reveals to us its riches of capacity and hope, as no merely human book has ever done. The mystery is cleared up, and we shout Amen, while our souls leap for joy when the bright sun of God's word rises upon us. There is healing in its wings. Now we know, as never before, what is the source of all that yearning, that wondering,

that high imagining, that deep sense of want, that restlessness, that anguish and crying out for something not yet ours, which make up our inmost and unspoken life. The Bible floods those depths in us with its light, makes the Sphinx within us tell her own riddle, so that we tremble with gladness when it says that God kindled our spirit from his own.

And this sun which rises so brightly upon us at first does not afterwards go down. The farther we look through the pages of the book, the more clearly does it shine out. The words in Job which say, "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding," re-echo those spoken in the beginning. David, looking on our poor mortal frame, wonders at the blessed truth: "What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him? for thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor." What is thus spoken the prophets speak with clearer voice, and what was a mystery in the Old Testament is unfolded in the New. The wondrous human spirit, with all its high ideas and possibilities, comes to perfection in Jesus of Nazareth. He, the perfect man, knew what the soul is, as we, with our dim vision, do not know, and he it was who said, "What shall it profit a man, though he gain the whole world and lose his

own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" It is therefore certain, dear friend, so far as our present topic is concerned, that the Bible can never be displaced by any other book. It has exhausted all the possibilities in the case. We vaguely dream of the high origin of the spirits in us; the Bible takes up those dreams, translates them into glorious truth, and raises them to a point where they blend with the life of God.

In what the Bible says of man's immortality, as in what it says of his inherent dignity, it confirms our natural knowledge: it not only confirms it, but increases it, and puts it in a clear and proper light. We should believe in our immortality if we had no Bible. We bring the idea of immortality with us into life. It is not first taught us. We have it before we have any teachers. It is engraven on the tablets of our hearts. We cannot help believing that we are immortal, however much we try. Do you ask me, then, why all children do not think of themselves as immortal till told that they are? why books are written to disprove the immortality of the soul? why many savage tribes seem to have no idea of any life but the present? These facts can be accounted for easily enough, without denying that the idea of immortality is in all men.

I think children are conscious of it before they speak it. The idea is in them, or it could not so

easily be taught them. Their souls leap forth to embrace it as soon as they hear any one give it a voice. They have many other ideas, of which they are, from the first, vaguely conscious, but which they have not learned to speak. There is in them the idea of beauty, of truth, of duty, of the right as always right. These ideas, and that of immortality also, they put into conceptions, and speak forth as soon as you give them the proper words. That they are immortal is a faith enshrined within them, — a precious inheritance which God gives them with their being itself.

But books have been written against immortality. Yes, and so have they been written against everything else which is true, or which man naturally believes. Man is a curious compound, a strange contradiction. He has a will of his own, by which he may turn himself any way, as their rudders turn the ships. Not only this, but out of his lower nature there comes up a tendency to err, a passion for darkness, a wanton love of vain speculations. As in the sea there is often an undercurrent running just the opposite way of the surface-current; as in the air the wind near the earth may blow one way, and just the other way in its upper depths, so there may be in man the instinctive faith of immortality together with the flat denial of it in theory and logic. The man who says that he does not believe that he is

immortal does not know himself, or has forgotten himself. He did thus believe before ever he doubted, and the remains of the belief are in him still. He was led away by some fondness for debate, or by the desire to formulate in words of his own what God has graven on his heart. His own arguments and speculations gathered like mould on the divine handwriting. He went sounding on a dim and perilous way till darkness filled him. He allowed himself to take a false position, and then his pride of opinion led him to hold it with all his strength. His logic proved more than a match for his faith, though his faith was true and his logic false. Thus it is that you may get all your books, lectures, or other denials of immortality, and the traces of the God-given faith still be in the soul. It is there, in the soul of the most sceptical, however rubbed away or covered up. That faith is a part of our manhood; and if we were wholly without it, we should not be men, but brutes.

The conviction of their immortality is only effaced or hidden in savage tribes. It is never wholly gone, as careful searching has shown. The savage may stare and shake his head when you tell him that the soul never dies. Yet the thought rivets his attention, his eye kindles with it as it is made clear to him, and at length he begins to see that in his very superstitions there is an

unconscious admission of the idea. He is conscious of it as soon as he is clearly conscious of any ideas at all. Nothing can be surer, then, than that we all have the idea of immortality, and that we cannot get away from it, however hard we try. Probably no man ever tried harder to do this than the poet Byron, at times. Yet we find even him using these words : —

“I feel my immortality o’ersweep  
All pains, all tears, all time, all fears ; and peal,  
Like the eternal thunders of the deep,  
Into my ears this truth — Thou liv’st forever.”

And now see how the Bible here speaks, how in accordance with the nature of things, as we expect God to speak on this subject, confirming our faith in man’s immortality, and bringing the truth out into a clear light, as no man could do. The Bible nowhere tries to prove our immortality as something wholly new to us. It assumes the great truth, takes it for granted, rather, as why should God not do, who knows that he has written it on our hearts? Some have tried to show that the earlier Hebrews knew nothing of this doctrine ; that they brought it back with them from Babylon. But this is certainly a mistake, for Christ quoted God’s words to the patriarchs as showing that they believed the doctrine. The translation of Enoch and Elijah, aye, even the necromancy and witchcraft into which God’s people fell, imply a

life beyond this life in the flesh, in which those early men believed. If less is said toward the beginning of the Old Testament than toward the end, and less in the Old than in the New Testament, there is good reason for this. The doctrine was taught in Egypt, where Israel had been, and was connected with many idolatrous rites. It was held by the corrupt nations round about Israel. It tended to degenerate into a gross spiritism, as in the case of Saul and the witch.

Now, God would save his people from these abuses of the doctrine, — from the Egyptian and other corruptions, to which they were so prone. He therefore withdrew their minds somewhat to the worship and duties of this life; he did not give them the doctrine till he had trained them to know how to use it, just as he did not send his Son till after long ages of preparation. But the idea was more or less spoken by inspired writers all along. In the later prophets, when the Jews had been thoroughly weaned from idolatry, it came out more clearly; in the words of our Lord and of his apostles, it burst in all its fulness upon the world. No grandest symphony of human voices, borne up on sublimest organ strains, ever stirred the soul like those words spoken at the grave of Lazarus, like those in which St. Paul paints the heavenly life of those whose bodies are sleeping in the grave.

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The Bible, then, utters forth, as no merely human books ever have or can, that idea of immortal life which is in us all. It takes up the subject so wisely, treats it so masterfully, speaks so profoundly and clearly, and so carries our thoughts out to all we need or wish to know, that our hearts compel us to see in it the true God and eternal life. No man ever thus wrote on the subject of immortality. We take up the book which has been proved to be the word of God, and, finding these words in it, we say, "It is none other than his; these are indeed the true sayings of God."

On one other point pertaining to man, the Bible has much to say. Not only is he immortal, and a spirit made in God's image, but he has thrown himself out of harmony with the moral universe, to which he belongs. He is at war with the moral order of the world. Here again is something which we should know of if we had no Bibles,—something which the Bible does not announce as a new fact, something which we naturally know, and which the Bible only emphasizes and brings clearly out into the light. The Bible is from God, and, viewing men in their relation to God, it calls the evil in them their sin, though we may call it by many other names. We say that man is naturally out of place; he is not in the element for which he was made; he is a planet wandering from his proper



orbit. We are all the time conscious of a power to do vastly better than we do. We do not follow that which is best in us, but go against it. Where there are exceptions to this fact, they are due to some influence which has come into men and changed their course. Looking on the mass of men, or taking them as they naturally are, we are constrained to say that they do not live in a manner which is worthy of them. The earthly, and selfish, and frivolous lives which they live are as much beneath them as it is beneath the eagle to leave his proper home in the air, and burrow like a fox.

Human society is organized on the presumption that men are inclined to disobey their higher nature. Safeguards, restraints, and punishments are put all about us, that we may be protected from one another, that the evil bent in us may be held in check. We are glad of these warnings and helps, — glad of anything which keeps us from sliding away downward, or which forces us up toward the life for which God made us. Such is the verdict which we pass on human life as a whole, where that life is unchecked and unchanged.

Now, see how exactly the Bible confirms and explains all this. It does not paint man any better than we know him to be. It paints him as he is. It is clearly the work of one who knows what is in

man. It reveals all the depths of human sinfulness, as only he who made man could possibly do. It tells us how men have reached their present low plane: they are fallen beings. That is to say, they have ceased to have fellowship with God, for which his image in them fitted them. They have not lived with him as his children, but have gone away, and become estranged. They have fallen under the power of the fleshly nature, and are living in a way wholly unworthy of their spiritual nature. This, briefly told, is what the Bible says of the fall of man. You see how exactly it agrees with the fact of man's essential nobleness, and with the sad state of things which we see around us in the world. Human wickedness is accounted for and drawn forth into the light as nowhere else. We turn over the pages of the Bible and we say, "These are not the words of men, but of one who knows us altogether." When we read that "our heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," we not only confess the truth of the charge, but feel that he who made the heart has searched it with an eye that sees all things. David asks God to cleanse him from faults of which he is unconscious; and the way of a man is to be "cleansed" by taking heed to God's word. The book shows who its author is by the wholly divine way in which it speaks of the sinfulness of men. They are just such words as we should expect the

heart-searching God to utter where we read of men : " They are all gone out of the way ; they are together become unprofitable ; there is none that doeth good ; no, not one." We should not dare bring this charge against our fellows, and only as we rise into full sympathy with God do we see how true it is. It can be nothing less than the word of God in which we read : " All souls are mine, the souls of the righteous and of the wicked ; the soul which sinneth, it shall die." None but God could say this, which we see to be profoundly true. The souls of the wicked are his, for he is the Father of spirits ; and they die when they sin, since sin separates them from him who is the source of their life.

Thus it is, my dear friend, that the Bible reveals God to us in the wonderful revelation of ourselves to us which it makes. We see none other than God in what it says of our high origin ; in what it says of our great destiny ; in what it says of our bitter estrangement from God — to all of which I have but briefly referred.

The woman of Samaria believed that Jesus was the Christ because he told her all that she ever did. He told her how wicked she had been, how unworthy of herself she had lived ; and she bowed under his true words in penitence and faith. May God make her the example which you shall even now follow ! The Bible tells you, as God alone

could, whence you came, whither you are bound, and what you now are. You have the sense of weariness, and the hunger and thirst, which tormented her. No water drawn from any earthly well, though it were that to which Jacob led his flocks, can quench the gnawing fire in your soul. But the water which God gives, and which springs up into everlasting life, comes to you in the Bible. That the Bible brings you this water, it proves by the way in which it lays open the depths and windings of your heart. Would you drink of that of which if one drink he shall not thirst again? Then do as the woman did. As she saw in Christ her master and saviour, so, dear friend, may you see in the book which speaks to you of Christ the true God and eternal life. As the men of the city came out at the saying of the woman, so let all men come to this book, and see how it reveals them to themselves, and they will be ready to say: "These are the true sayings of God, in which he tells us how sadly we have wandered into sin, while he lovingly waits to hear our repentances, and forgive and bless."

## CHAPTER IX.

### WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS OF GOD.

THE internal evidences for the Bible, like the external, are inexhaustible. I showed a little in the last chapter how the Bible speaks concerning man. It speaks in such a way as we should expect God to, — confirming our previous knowledge of human nature, and opening in it new depths which we at once recognize as a part of our real life. We are more or less conscious of high spiritual powers; with that consciousness the Bible everywhere agrees, and accounts for it as human reasoning never could, by carrying it up to God, who is the Father of our spirits. We have also an instinctive feeling that we are immortal; this feeling the Bible everywhere assumes as true, and it brings clearly out into the light the life and immortality of which we are faintly conscious. We read what it says of the future and the unseen, and, with awed and gladdened hearts, we say, "Never man spake thus: this is God's voice." And not only are we spiritual and immortal, but we are sinful. It is a truth of our observation and of our experience that men are not in harmony

with the law of their being. We find them at war with that law, out of their orbit, not naturally rising towards God, but struggling away from him into death. This much we know without the Bible; but the Bible confirms it, takes it for granted, restates it with a thoroughness and power of which man is not capable. The longer we listen the deeper does our conviction become that God is speaking to us.

I pass now from what the Bible says of man to what it says concerning God. The great theme of the Scriptures is God himself; they are a revelation of him, if they are anything. His presence fills them as the sunlight fills the planetary spaces. This fact itself falls in with the idea that the Bible is from God. God is its theme, as he is the theme of no other book. Everywhere it brings him before us as the Being of beings whom we need to meet face to face. It confirms our previous knowledge of God, and adds to it in a way so above all human power that we naturally say, while reading it, "These are the words of God."

The fact that the Bible does not try to prove the existence of God, but takes it for granted, is a proof of its divine origin. It sometimes alludes to those who say there is no God, but, instead of arguing with them, it calls them "fools." It declares that all men have knowledge of God, both reflected from the outer world and written in

their hearts. If any are at all without that knowledge, this is not because they never had it, but because they have disliked to retain it in their thoughts. Their foolish mind has been darkened by turning away from God, and worshipping and serving the creature. Thus does the Bible put the case of those who deny that there is a God. It does not argue with them any more than we argue with a blind man about colors, or with a deaf man about sounds and voices. It undertakes the rather to open their eyes that they may see, and to unstop their ears that they may hear.

Now this is a most remarkable thing in the Bible. This makes it unlike the vast mass of books which speak to us about God. These are continually trying to prove that there is a God, whereas he is the truth of truths, whose existence is above all proof. He comes with us into the world, and he never leaves nor forsakes us. This is every year getting to be more and more the common faith of mankind. Men would never have tried to prove that there is a God, if they had not been first blinded by reason of sin. I would do full justice to our painstaking thinkers who have constructed now this argument, and now that, for the existence of God. Their labors have grown into many a portly volume, which does much credit to their acuteness, their research, their depth and breadth of thought. The preacher often has occa-

sion to use their facts and reasonings when he would confirm the faith of his hearers or his own faith. Then, again, if we would bring men to God, we must meet them on their own ground. Whenever they have sunk down through a process of doubting till they have reached the low level of atheism, we must address to them such arguments as they will listen to, if we would see them intellectually convinced. But I think it better that we should not be too anxious about this intellectual conviction; it will come fast enough, if the heart be first reached.

Persons are apt to be repelled farther and farther into atheism by arguments addressed only to the head. Young men, who never had thought of doubting the divine existence, have come out of the theological schools confirmed atheists. Oh, that they might have been kept in a warm, religious atmosphere; that they might have been under instructors who taught them to commune with God, rather than lean to their own understanding! Then, the spiritual life in them being thoroughly alive, it would have been impossible for them to doubt. What is needed to save the young from skepticism is not argument, but a larger inbreathing of the Holy Spirit. Let there be not merely a religious excitement now and then, but a genuine revival of religion in all our schools every year, and the crop of doubters would be very light. A



great many atheists have been made by our trying to prove that there is a God. If we would just assume that God is, and that all men naturally believe in his existence; and if we would meet men at this point, and clear up and strengthen the faith already in them, there would be but little need of other argument.

And just here it is that the Bible meets all men. With a wisdom which is more than human, which is supernatural and divine, it brings out into the clear light of their consciousness that belief in God which men already have. The grand object in calling Abraham was not to teach that there is a God, but to have a people in the earth who should have correct views of God. Men had degraded God in their conceptions of him, and had fallen into idolatry. The noblest and truest thing in them, — their yearning for him, — being blinded, was misleading them into the worship of the powers of nature, and of beasts and creeping things. The Bible, everywhere assuming that men have a faith in God of some sort, comes to them just as they are, and tries to make them see what the true God is. It would rescue them from idolatry by revealing him to them. The object all along is not to show them some new thing, but to save them from what is false by showing them what is true. There is in every spirit of man a yearning for God, just as in the body there is an

appetite for food. Men must eat something. If they do not have food which is wholesome, their hunger will drive them to that which does them harm.

Now, the Bible recognizes the universal longing for God; does not come to create it, but to bring it wholesome food; to guide it in safe paths. There is a faith in the wildest idolater which it gloriously confirms, which it holds to be above all price. It meets that dim, misguided faith, bending to it in wondrous love, waiting upon it with more than a mother's patience, speaking to it in words to which it can listen, lifting it up, breathing life into it, leading it out into the true light, showing to it the true God for whom it was feeling in the dark, and teaching it to look on him and say, "Abba, Father." This is what the Bible does, all it does, to cure men of their doubts concerning God. It tells us that we already believe in him, as we know that we do. It stoops to this blinded faith, and tenderly lifts it up out of darkness and sin. We are thankful for its gracious treatment of us. There is that in us which leaps forth with joy at its coming. It speaks the very thoughts concerning God which had all our lives lain within us, but for which we had found no voice. That voice it is. It is our John the Baptist, a voice crying in the wilderness of our own thoughts, which all that is good in us comes

out to hear. As we read on, and enter into the meaning of what we read, our hearts say, "Why had no one ever thought of these things before?"

We have believed in this God from our birth, but could not speak our faith. No man has been able to speak it for us. The words of men have made us almost doubt that there is a God. But here is a book which, unlike all other books, speaks of God just as our hearts would speak if they had a voice. It also tells us many wondrous and glorious things concerning him which we could not find out, but which, now that we see them, we rejoice in with a joy unspeakable. If there were no external proofs, this internal witness would be enough for us. We read these glowing pages, and the God whom we have yearned for is no longer an unknown God. We begin to see him as he is. He draws our hungry spirits away from all false gods. He is revealed to us, and we feel all through our souls that the words which we are reading are his words. As no one can know what is in us save as we ourselves tell, so this book, which tells us what is in God, must be his own words. Who knows the things of a man save his own spirit? and so that which knows and tells the things of God, telling them in so wonderful a manner, can be none other than the spirit of God.

Passing on, then, from the truth that God is,

to these things of God which the Bible tells as only God could, we notice among them the fatherhood of God, on which the Bible so insists. This truth is correlative to one which we considered in the last chapter. In what the Bible says of men we saw that they are the children of God; and now, in what it says of God, we are made to see that he is the Father of men. In the genealogy of our Lord, which is given in the third of Luke, his parentage is traced to Enoch, "which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God." But man became unconscious of this divine sonship by falling into sin; it lay dead within him in the midst of his trespasses; and, with the sonship, the fatherhood also faded out of his sight. Man has become an orphan only by departing from God. The great Father still lives, nor does he forget or cease to love his prodigal child. It is our knowledge of God's fatherhood, not the fatherhood itself, which went away from the world when man sinned. It only seemed to go because the sonship, the power of seeing it and rejoicing in it, went. The light seems to fade from the landscape as our vision grows dim, yet it may be as bright as ever. When we think the stars have faded out of the sky, that is not because they are no longer there, but because we have lost the power of seeing them. The fatherhood was ever true, as it now

is, and ever will be, but the sonship proved false. That turned its back on God, — desired not the knowledge of his ways, lost his original power of seeing him. Yet man did not lose, he could not wholly lose, his instinctive feeling after God. He soon found, in the far country, that he needed a Father, and wondered whether or not he had a Father.

We believe that God is this divine Father, dear friend, before we read the Bible. It is one of those necessary ideas which are a part of the original outfit of our minds. Our Bibles only wake it up within us as we read them. The fatherhood of God, in which we naturally believe, does not mean mere indulgence, an easy good nature, forgiveness without cause. One of the elements of a true fatherhood is justice, love of order, the equal and impartial treatment of those who hold the relation of children. We want to feel that there is, at the head of the universe, One who will care for all its interests, in whose hands it is forever safe. He must hate wrong just as thoroughly as he loves what is right; otherwise he cannot be the Father for whom we are looking. We must know that he is this, that he cares for the whole, that he will let no great interest suffer; then we can come with assurance to him when we are in trouble, when our hearts are pained, when the sense of guilt is strong within us. The Bible

must show us such a God as this, or he is not the Father we want.

And what does the Bible say to us about God as soon as we open it? Are we not amazed to find how exactly it answers to the ideas and longings of our hearts? Has any man ever given, could any man ever give, an account of God so responsive to the demand within us? We read on and on, and are struck to see how his interest in us as our Maker and Ruler comes out. The more masculine traits of the fatherhood first show themselves. We see that God is impartial, that he will put down wrong, that he reigns in justice and truth. Thus is the basis of a sound fatherhood laid in the earlier parts of the history. Yet from the beginning the love of God shines forth. The Bible has more to say of God's tenderness as we get farther on in it. The justice and sovereignty are not forgotten, they nowhere sink out of sight. Yet the gentleness and love come out more and more, the farther we get in the book, till we come to Jesus Christ, in whom the father dwelt, full of grace and truth. In a way that is most wonderful, mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other.

In due time there is a perfect divine sonship on earth in Jesus of Nazareth; and he it is who teaches us that we should call God by the tender name of "Father." If we tremble when we think of the

wrongs and violences which fill the earth, the God whom the Bible reveals to us allays all our fears. Though our hearts condemn us for our faults, yet, in our own penitence, we have confidence towards God. He is not like an earthly father. He changes not. The sonship failed in us, but the fatherhood never fails; it is without shadow of turning. Not only in its impartial justice, but in its forgiving tenderness, it is yesterday, to-day, and forever, the same.

Such is a little of what the Bible tells us concerning God. Does it not answer to our natural ideas of him, and to all those wants which we expect him to supply? As the key fits the lock, as the child knows its father's voice, so this Bible, wondrously fitted to our case, saying what we expected God to say, just what we most yearned to hear from him, can be none other than God's message to men. If we are weak and fearful and unknowing, it tells us that he is infinitely strong and calm and wise. He forgives the guilty, he restrains the wayward, he chastens the imperfect. When we are in difficulty, he succors us; he cheers us when we faint; when we are in sorrow he brings comfort; and when we are dying he says, "Behold, I live."

I might weary you, did I go too far with this inquiry, showing you, all through the Bible, how the God whom the Bible reveals is just such an one

as we expect and need. It speaks as divinely of him as it does of man. His presence fills it as the water does the sea, as the sunlight does the sky. The book lies open before you like a boundless expanse of rosy bloom. You would require ages of time to wander through it and examine each particular flower. This is what all prophets, all singers, all apostles, all preachers, all writers upon the truths of the Bible, have been doing for thousands of years. They have not yet got to the end. They never will open all the seals. Only the Lamb in the midst of the throne can do that; for in its breadth and length and depth and height, the love of God passeth knowledge. It is of God's love, infinitely tender and infinitely just, that the Bible tells us; and in eternity, as in time, we shall sing, "The half was never told." But how that love pours itself out in the one sacred book! As much of it as words will contain is there. It swells the sentences and phrases to bursting, as the breath of spring swells the buds throughout the forests. Even its narratives of earthly events, and its genealogies, and catalogues of forgotten names, drop with fatness, like the pastures of the wilderness.

Whatever else you say of the Bible, you are obliged to confess that it is full of God. It does not let you go from his presence or escape from his spirit. It pours his blessed life around and



through you if you have a willing soul, as the sun pours his splendor round the world. Read the Bible as you should, and you will find your soul swimming in God as the fishes swim in the sea; his presence will waft you on as the air wafts the birds in their flight. This is what makes the Bible so wonderful, — the book of books. God is in it, and fills it, so that the very style of its composition, though largely the work of unlearned men, stands supreme and alone. In sublimity, in naturalness, in beauty and simplicity, in clearness and grandeur and force, and the absence of all pretence, it has never been approached, nor can it ever be. God is in it, and, therefore, all the glory and harmony and sweetness of the universe, yea, more than all, is gathered within its lids. You meet God at every turn and step of the wondrous pathway, nor do you ever weary of his presence; the more you look, the more do you long to see. For though he is everywhere essentially the same God in his love and goodness and truth, yet he shows himself in ways which are ever new and fresh, which are divinely suited to the exact case you are in.

He joins himself to you in the very first verse of the book, and journeys on with you all the way, nor do you once miss him if your eyes are open while you walk. I bless God for giving us this book, — the book which is so full of him, which

makes him its mighty theme, nor seems to care for aught else! This is my inheritance, this is my light, this is my refreshment and rest! What care I for other portions while this is mine? I walk on through its heavenly paths, everywhere golden with God's presence, and I do not wonder that it has changed, and is still changing, the face of the world. It is all clear to me now; no longer a hidden mystery, but an open secret, that the Bible has turned so many islands and continents to Christ; for I find that God is in it, and fills it, and walks with it through the world. He is there,—the God who, our yearning hearts tell us, must somewhere be revealed. It tells us, in a way which hushes the deep cry of the human spirit, of the fatherhood which is just, of the mercy which hates wrong, of the tenderness which is impartial, of the love which never fails. It tells us, as nature but merely hints, as no other book ever can tell us, of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; of the covenants, of redemption, of healing and cleansing; of the victory over death, of the life beyond life, in which what is now dark shall be made plain. It tells us of ten thousand things which guide, comfort, and strengthen us, which we had all our lives been groping after in the dark; which we felt must exist somewhere in some great Father, and which, being revealed to us by it, make us exclaim, "This is indeed that true God

and eternal life which should come into the world!"

Is it not a joy to know, dear friend, that there has been one instance of sonship in our world, though only one, which was a perfect response to the fatherhood of God? The sonship died in Adam, but it was made alive in Christ, and in him alone it has not failed. How this singles out Christ from all that have been born of women, and makes him the one Christ to us, as there is one sun in our heavens! We cannot look on our own dishonored sonship, and come with confidence to the Father; but we can look on his, and know that for his sake God will regard us as dear children. He is our elder brother; he represents us in our relations to the Father; he mediates for us with God, and with him God is ever well pleased.

What love for us God showed by inspiring men to tell us these precious truths concerning him, which truths he had revealed to them! God has all he desires in himself. It is his glory to be concealed. Why should he not love that solitude, that life within himself, which is the highest boon that we sometimes covet? But he does not stay in his secret place; he comes out of his covert, and shows himself unto us, not for his sake, but for ours. Shall he thus come to us, and we shrink from him? Shall he call, and we not answer,—speak, and we not hear? Shall his love bring him

to us, and we lack the loving impulse which shall carry us to him. We know that we are his sinful children, as his book tells us we are. Our hearts leap for joy at the tidings of his perfect fatherhood, which that book brings us. Oh, that we might rise up and go to him, that he might say of each one of us, "This my son was dead, and is alive again ; was lost, but is found !"

## CHAPTER X.

### WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS OF MORAL ORDER.

THE Bible shows itself to be the work of God, not only in what it says of God and man, but in what it says of the moral order of the world. What I mean by the *moral* order of the world will be clear to us if we look a little at the *physical* order of the world, and the laws on which that order depends.

The most obvious instance of order or harmony in nature is that which depends on the law of gravitation, on the attraction which every particle of matter has for every other particle. There is unity and harmony throughout nature, from the circumference to the centre. All the matter in the universe, though scattered through infinite space, and infinitely various in forms and functions, is yet one harmonious system, owing to that force and law of gravity to which it is everywhere obedient. This wondrous force has ruled the ten thousand suns in immeasurable space, and has created their planetary systems. It keeps the countless worlds in their places, and rolls them on in their daily and yearly rounds. The tendency of every atom of matter towards every other atom

holds the solid earth together, and keeps the ocean from rising up into the air. It is the ballasting which keeps the ships in the embrace of the waves ; without it the fishes could not swim, nor the birds fly. The force of gravity holds all men and animals to the surface of the ground, it makes our homes and cities stand firm, it keeps our carriages and trains on the roadways which we make for them. But for gravitation and its laws, the streams would have no flow downward, the seed which quits the sower's hand would not drop into the soil, the ploughshare could not turn its furrow. The force of gravity draws the roots of the trees down into the ground, makes the trees stand upright, brings their ripened fruits or seeds into the earth to make other trees. Thus it is that we have, out of his one mighty force, the beautiful order of the physical world, so essential to our physical being and well-being, and which so enchants our minds.

Now we know that in the moral world, as in the natural, there is a single principle of order to which all our activities, and all the activities of other moral beings throughout the universe, should conform. When there is this conformity we shall have in its highest manifestation the moral order of the world. We call this principle of universal moral order by various names, such as righteousness, justice, benevolence, rectitude of conduct, the right good-will to men, disinterested love, and

so on. This idea of a principle or law of moral order, which is binding upon all rational beings, is native to our minds. We do not first get it from our Bibles. All men have it, however sadly neglected and undeveloped, even where the words of revelation have not gone. Though we may do wrong ourselves, we demand that others shall do right. Our own thoughts condemn us when we swerve from this principle of moral rectitude. The wicked know that they ought to be righteous, the selfish that they should do as they would be done by, those who bite and devour one another that they should love their neighbor as themselves. If any man says he does not know this, it is because he does not know himself. The idea is in him, nor can it ever be wholly destroyed. He may have perverted it; all men have, more or less. He may have let the faculty for this knowledge rust in him unused. A sensual and brutal life may have put it to sleep, but it is there. It comes forth into his consciousness, upbraids him for his evil ways, and still points him to the faith he should walk in, as often as he reflects.

Now the question is, Does the Bible honor, reaffirm, clear up, and put in a stronger light than any other book ever has, this inherent conviction of the human mind? If a man should undertake to teach us about nature, and should deny the law of gravitation which Newton discovered, we could

give him no heed, but should at once turn him a deaf ear. On the other hand, if he recognized the law, if he set forth its nature and workings as neither Newton nor any one else ever has, showing an entire and wonderful mastery of the whole subject, then we should listen to him ; and if he claimed to be specially commissioned to expound nature to us, we should be disposed to admit his claim. It is on such a ground, dear friend, that we must receive the Bible as God's book, when it speaks to us of the moral order of the world.

The Bible nowhere denies the law of rectitude written on our hearts. It affirms that law all through its pages ; emphasizes it, expounds it, clears it up, and applies it as no other book has, as all other books together never have. Many ethical systems have been thought out by man, — those of Socrates, Confucius, Sakya-muni, Aristotle, Seneca. But the ethics of the Bible puts out all their light, as the noontide sun does that of our candles. Even those human systems which have been written since the Bible came, and which are largely drawn from it, nevertheless utterly fail to reach its high plane. It expounds our duties to one another with a plainness, a thoroughness, and a self-evidencing power which we nowhere else find. It reveals us to ourselves in our divine and eternal relations, as other books do not even pretend to do. The horizon of conscience around



us is widened while it speaks, and we see the sweep and glory of the law of righteousness in a wholly new and heavenly light.

How wonderfully it teaches the one great law of all moral order!—more by example than by abstract precept, especially in the beginning. God himself first appears as the perfect embodiment of the principle. He calls and sets apart men, from Abraham onward, whose office it is to uphold this law. So far as they are true to their office we see order coming out of confusion, and God steps forth to vindicate moral order when it is broken. The first kingdom which he sets up is a theocracy; for only as he, who is love, rules in the earth, does social chaos end and the true order of society begin. That the Judge of all the earth would do right was a truth which the most untutored conscience could accept. Yet how wisely, in a slow and progressive way, as men could bear it, the law of righteousness is unfolded in the Bible! It does not at once bind on men's shoulders a burden too heavy to be borne. It was but gradually that men could be lifted out of the wickedness in which they were sunk.

God allowed some things to them on account of the hardness of their hearts. The morality of the Old Testament was perfect in principle, but could come out only imperfectly in the lives of those primitive men. With this human imperfection

God had patience, as he still is patient toward human faults. In one alone, Jesus Christ his own Son, was the principle of moral order acted out perfectly in our world. He did the Father's will. He was love, as the Father is love. He showed us in his life and death what is that law which, when all men obey it, will make the moral and social world more gloriously in harmony than the world of matter.

But before that which was perfect came, all through the times of the imperfect, the law of righteousness was made manifest. Men and nations were destroyed for breaking this law, and the people of God prospered only as they obeyed it. The word "righteousness," or its equivalents, resounds all through the writings of Moses, of David and Solomon, of the later prophets. It rises more and more into view, as in the geological periods the mountains rose out of the sea; as we all pass from infancy to manhood by a process of gradual unfolding; as in the fields where we have sown our grain there is first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. The perfect moral order which came forth in Jesus Christ, and which is one day to make the lives of all men a psalm of praise in God's ear, was that which moved him to make the earth and put man upon it; was that which he watched all through the unfolding of his purpose; is that which shines forth

more and more clearly upon us as we turn the pages of the Bible. Whether we call it righteousness, or benevolence, or love, the law of it is written on our hearts; and the Bible gives it back to us in such clear and uniform and authoritative tones as belong to none but God.

This law of moral order is common to God and all his children. Let us not fear to think of God as himself setting us an example of obedience. He does obey this sacred, all-encompassing law of which I have spoken; and it is by thus obeying that he reigns supreme. God would not be God if he should cease to be love. Our own hearts tell us this, and the Bible confirms what they say. God will never disobey the law which is to bring harmony and peace to the universe at last. He is supreme. He has in himself all blessedness and power. Hence it is not possible that he should ever be tempted to do wrong. Our temptations arise out of the fact that we are finite; that we are not wholly blessed; that we long for things which are not as yet ours. If we were perfectly satisfied with what is innocently ours, we could not be tempted to break the law of love. Therefore, God cannot be tempted to break it. If he should, his sense of guilt would be to ours as the ocean to the drop. What is the power of conscience in us to what it is in him? He tells us that he hates iniquity: what, then, if he should see iniquity in

himself? The wrong doing of poor, feeble mortals has spread confusion through our world: what, then, would happen if the infinite God should do wrong? If he were wrong, all our righteousness could amount to nothing; but he is right, and, therefore, the universe is safe, and shall at last sing its glad psalm of peace, despite all the wickedness which is now in it. Such is the testimony of our deepest thought, and to it the Bible is one glorious divine response.

God obeys the law which is yet to harmonize the moral world, and for this cause he is infinitely blessed. Not because he is great, not because he made and rules all things, not because he is high and lifted up and worshipped by both angels and men; but because he is good, because he is love, because he watches over all beings and events with a fatherly tenderness, and will at length bring them to the highest possible beauty and glory, is he forevermore filled with a boundless and radiant joy. And what his living for the harmony of the moral universe does for him, such in proper measure may our respect to the law of righteousness do for us. It is a law common to us and him, and it works out everywhere the same results. They can differ only in degree, never in kind. If we are righteous, we shall eat the fruits of righteousness; if we sow to the spirit, we shall of the spirit reap life everlasting; if we are helping to make

the new heavens and earth, we shall ourselves be renewed with them. God, who is love, gave his joy to Christ, and Christ gives his joy to as many as live his life of meekness and self-sacrifice. There is a kind of superficial happiness which depends on earthly position, — how you are clothed and fed, what your fellow-men think of you, or the power you are able to wield over them. But real blessedness depends on none of these things. So your heart teaches you, and to this teaching the Bible gives more than a human, a truly divine, response. It clearly and mightily says, as your own soul says feebly, that you are not blessed as you are rich, as you are powerful, as you are honored of men, as you have all earthly pleasures and delights, but as you love the Lord your God with all your heart, and your neighbor as yourself. Love, true love, such love as Christ had and proclaimed, not only casts out fear, but everything else which has torment; it makes you to be in league with the divine order of the world; all things are yours, and you are swept on with them, God himself being over all and in all, to that bright consummation which God has purposed. The more you study the laws of your own conscience, the more does some such glorious dream as this open before you in the far-coming vistas; and the Bible is that divine word which comes to you to interpret your dream.

But I have hinted at the doom of those who break this law, at what God would suffer if he could possibly cease to regard it. We know that men are, in their character and life, unlike God, and one of the first things which the Bible teaches us is that they have thus fallen away. We cannot clearly account for this apostasy, nor does the Bible attempt to solve for us the dark problem of evil. Our great need is to be raised out of the pit of sin; and to that gracious work the Bible applies itself. Yet it throws light, such as man could not, into the gulf out of which it would lift us. It brings in a malign spiritual power. This power it gives personality to in the form of the serpent, and shows it to us in Eden. Man would not have fallen but for two things: a desire within him for what God had forbidden, and the tempter appealing to that desire. Our finiteness, our yearning for what we have not, so strikingly pictured to us by the tree in the midst of the garden, lays us open to temptation. That is as far as human thought has ever gone in regard to the origin of sin; and for that we are indebted to the Bible, which threw this utmost possible light on the dark question ages before human philosophy was born. The doctrine of Satan, prince of the power of the air, of which the Bible is so full, has been objected to by superficial thinkers, but never by those who think profoundly on the origin of evil. It is a great light

shed on the facts of human wickedness, it joins with the tree in the midst of the garden in proclaiming that the Bible is God's book.

And as what the Bible says of the origin of sin shows it to be divine, so what it says of its consequences, of punishment, of retribution, proves the same. The idea of retribution was in the world before the Bible came. All men had it; it is native to the human mind, and was waked up by the presence of sin. You can find no race, no tribe; no man, woman, or child in which this idea has not shown itself in some form. The imagery of outer darkness, of unquenchable fire, of the worm that never dies, was in the world when the Bible began to be written. It makes use of this material imagery, as on all themes it speaks the common language of men. But how it has cleared up the doctrine which it found!—not denying it, everywhere confirming it, yet gradually taking away from it all that was gross and brutal, tracing it to the laws of conscience, making it that remorse, that fiery and eternal self-condemnation, that abhorrence felt by God and all righteous beings, which we know from experience that the commission of crime and sin must ever bring. The retribution into which we are hurried by our sins is due to the laws which govern our moral nature; God does not arbitrarily inflict it upon us.

What, then, should we say of a book which did not recognize those laws? What must we say of any or all books which deny retribution, or which try to show that it is not in the Bible? Its absence from the Bible would go to show that the book is not divine, that it is a merely human and sophistical book. When God speaks, he says, as our moral nature says: "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." We know who it was that said: "Thou shalt not surely die." Oh, how hard it must have been for God to warn and threaten his sinning children as he does all through the Bible! You know from what earthly parents often suffer that it must have grieved him to the heart. But what are our pity and tenderness to his? He is infinite in all his attributes, in his emotions, in his feelings toward sinful men. His compassions are unspeakable. Yet the Bible, claiming to speak for him, probes the human conscience as no other books do. Is any but God capable of such faithfulness? Would any other dare so to arraign mankind? or could even he do it, except to make an entrance into our hearts for some saving and cleansing mercy which he brings? He dares to gather up those elements of remorse which are in us all, and to give them back to us in tones fitted to make us cry out for deliverance. Ah, dear friend, if you would but hear those tones! The sweet tenderness and compassion which breathe through them are infinite.



Read the rebukes of our blessed Lord to the Pharisees, and to his own faithless disciples. Nowhere else can you find any denunciations so terrible. Yet could we have been there, could we have heard him speak, and looked on his sorrowful face, we can but think that his heavenly accents would have melted our hearts, and that we should have wept, as he often wept, over sinning men. But God cannot be anything less than God. He is faithful and true, infinitely honest in his dealing with us. The Bible shows that it is his word to us, in what it says of the consequences of our sins. That law of righteousness on which the moral order of the world depends is eternal. It is to the relations of all rational beings what the law of gravity is to the world of matter. God obeys it, and is supremely blessed. He made his universe for it, and it shall bring all who obey it into perfect harmony at last. This much our own consciousness tells us; and if we have broken that holy law, we carry within us the witness that we cannot escape its doom. With that inward witness the Bible agrees, agrees with it as no other book ever has. We read it, and we say, "How thoroughly the author of this book knows what is in men! Our ideas of moral order, and of the blessedness or retribution which that order deals out, are here all confirmed, cleared up, put in such a light as we can nowhere else find. He who has

sent us this book must be one who knows us altogether, who searches our hearts, who tries our reins, who weighs our spirits in a balance.”

None but the God who made man could have this profound knowledge of man's spiritual nature. God alone could thus beset us behind and before, and lay his hand upon us; could reveal to us those deep workings of our minds which we lack words to speak. We are fearfully and wonderfully made, and that our soul knoweth right well. Yet here is one who knows us better than we know ourselves. Our most secret faults are committed in the light of his countenance. Our dreamy and half-formed desires he gives back to us in such a way that we are thereby first revealed to ourselves. We find that there is not a thought in our heart, or a word in our tongue, but lo! he knows it altogether. Can this be a man who is speaking to us out of *this* book? Never! Impossible! So meagre a cause could never produce so wondrous an effect. God is in this book. It makes the place where it is none other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven.

“There are, in this unreverential age,  
Who, dazed by vain philosophy, have classed  
The revelations of the sacred page  
Amongst the bursten bubbles of the past.  
Be ours the wisdom still to hold them fast;

Not as despising aught that sense can teach,  
Or any light that closer search may cast  
On this world's mysteries, or thought can reach  
From inmost corners of its right domain;  
But firmly fixed in this: that after each  
Has reaped its ripest knowledge, there remain  
Truths that transcend or human thought or speech,  
Or nature's oracle. These to despise,  
When God unveils them, let us think unwise."

## CHAPTER XI.

### WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS OF REDEMPTION.

I HAVE, in the last three chapters, spoken a little of certain truths and facts which we partially know before the Bible comes to us ; which truths and facts the Bible not only confirms, but thoroughly reveals and clears up in a way possible to none but God.

Concerning man, we know that he has high spiritual capacities, and the Bible tells us that he is the child of God ; we know that he thinks himself immortal, and this thought the Bible brings out into the light ; we know that he is out of harmony with himself and the true order of things, and the Bible tells us that he has fallen away from his original fellowship with God. Concerning God, we know that he exists, and the Bible everywhere takes his existence for granted ; we know that he must have a father's feelings towards us, and the Bible gives to this knowledge a new glory and depth ; our idea of him makes us feel that he must be infinitely just and impartial, and the Bible everywhere assures us that he will do right. Concerning the moral order of the world, we know

that there is a law of righteousness which all rational beings should obey, and the Bible throughout its pages solemnly proclaims the sacredness of this law; we know that all who keep this law are blessed, and this knowledge the Bible wonderfully clears up; we know that whoever breaks this law of righteousness or love brings on himself the condemnation of all enlightened consciences, and the Bible paints to us in flaming colors the awfulness of this doom.

But I now bring you, dear friend, to that in the Bible which our natural reason does not reveal to us, — to that which the angel meant when he said to our Lord's mother, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall *save his people from their sins.*" This is the Holy of Holies in God's precious book. We should approach it with awe, yet with a tremulous joy. There is not, in this volume, space for an adequate treatment of the theme; or if there were the space and the time, no man can speak of it as it deserves. Redeeming love is the wonder of wonders, as it is the truth of truths. The greatest minds have been trying to expound it ever since God first revealed it to man, but it is yet the unexplained mystery. Children know as much of it as the wise and prudent. Angels try to look into it, but it is sealed to their gaze. We may know its power in our experience, but all our attempts to draw it out into dogmas or

formulas fall short. We may lift the curtain, we may enter in, we may look on the mystery till we feel the load of guilt falling away from our hearts ; but when asked to tell what it is, we can only say, "It is the blood of Calvary, it is the cross of Jesus Christ."

This was an absolutely new truth in the world when God first spoke it to men. Turn off on either hand from the pathway of divine revelations, and search where you will among secular histories, and you nowhere come upon the clear announcement of salvation from sin. That voice first began to be heard in Eden as soon as the forbidden fruit was eaten, and it culminated in the glad cry at Bethlehem, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." The greatest sages of antiquity, to whom God had not spoken, were unable to believe in the forgiveness of sin. Socrates and Plato, who came as near the truth as any, only hoped that in some way God might be able to forgive sin, but they did not see how. They believed in the punishment of sin with all their heart ; but how the sinner could be saved from punishment was a question before which they stood dumb. We cannot doubt that they, and perhaps millions of others who did not hear of a Saviour from sin while in the flesh, yet had such contrition and such views of the guilt of sin, that they would have at once laid hold of the

cross, had it been shown them ; nor can we doubt that they now rejoice in it in the world where all is revealed. Yes, dear friend, men have always been able to discover that they were sinners, and that the laws of conscience doomed them to suffer for their sin. But how to escape this doom when it had been once incurred was a dark riddle which they could not solve, from the bare sight of which they shrank appalled. As long ago as the time of Job the cry broke forth out of guilty hearts, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? how shall man be just with God?"

This question, which presses upon all men, and which no man has ever answered, not only has so clear an answer in the Bible as to prove that the Bible is God's book, but the answer itself, though the only one possible, is such that our poor, blind hearts are sometimes slow to accept it. The mighty truth of atonement, of reconciliation to God, of propitiation for sin through the blood of Jesus Christ, has been set at naught and ridiculed. But it is when men have not seen their sin, when they have forgotten the laws of conscience and the moral order of the world, that they have mocked. When they have known themselves, and that eternal order with which their lives are at war, they have not said that the vicarious sacrifice is a relic of barbarism, or that the doctrine of atonement makes God a merciless tyrant, or

that the cross is "the central gallows of the universe." Far from that! Feeling their guilt, and knowing that in the nature of things punishment must forever follow guilt, they wonder and adore, and believe and love, when they see the blood which cleanses from all sin, when they behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world.

This truth of a crucified Redeemer, in whose death we die unto sin, and in whose life we are made alive unto God, is that which gives to the Bible its unique and unspeakable value for us. Take the sun out of the heavens, but do not take this out of the holy message which God has sent us. This is the shrine for which the temple was built; and what is the temple without the shrine? That temple, the revelation which God has given, stands before us beautiful and vast. Its massive walls and soaring pinnacles draw us to it from afar. On all sides of it doors stand open, through which the solemn light and the song flow forth over us. Enter by what door of inquiry we will, all the aisles lead inward and inward, till we stand under the glory of the high and surrounding dome. There it is that we see the cross which gives a divine meaning to the whole building, — the cross in which St. Paul gloried, refusing to glory in aught else; the cross around whose head sublime is gathered all the light of sacred story; the



cross which towers above the wrecks of mighty civilizations; the cross which is everywhere cherished as the symbol of what is holiest and sweetest in the world. Let no scoffing criticism spit out its venom against this sacred and blessed thing. Take away the Book when you have taken this away out of the Book. What is it to us but an unspeakable torment to know that God is holy and made the universe for holiness, while we find no salvation from the sin under which we are fallen? Conscience and reason and nature tell us all that is dark or horrible in our case. If this Book only repeats their words, if it does not bring us any tidings of a rescue from our doom, take it away. We want no more sense of guilt, we want forgiveness. We want no more darkness, we want light. We want no more of the wrath of God, we want peace with God. Tear down the temple, let not one stone of it remain upon another, if the cross which we need to find at its centre be taken away. This is what our hearts say, and this is what they do who take from the Bible the cross of Christ. That gone, the whole structure falls to pieces. It has no coherence or meaning left. Those who do not find an atonement, salvation from sin, peace with God through Jesus Christ, in the Bible, soon find themselves without any Bible at all. Having spoiled the kernel, they throw away the husk.

You send for your physician not merely to learn

that you are sick, — you know that already, — but that you may be healed. Suppose he comes and tells you what you knew before, gives you a clearer knowledge than you had of your exact condition, and then goes away. He does not tell you what to do, does not prescribe any remedies. How long would you suffer yourself to be thus mocked? He is no physician to you who only tells you that you are sick, and does not tell you how to get well. You know that you are hurt; “Is there no balm in Gilead? May not my hurt be healed?” is your anxious cry. “Yes, there is balm: you may be healed,” says the great Physician. If all the wise men who have ever lived should come to us, and try to tell us how we may be in harmony with the moral order of the world, they could not do it. They would be forced to go away and leave us no medicine. They would have either to depart in silence, or say: “You must die; we can do nothing for you.” But the Bible comes, and it says nothing of this sort. They are the mighty words of comfort and hope which it speaks to us. It shows us the malignity of our disease as nothing else could, but it does not then say that we must die; no, dear friend, it says *live*: “Live, for I have found a ransom.”

“I have found a ransom,” is the glad voice which rolls through the sky from the Alpha to the Omega of this message. That is the everlasting

gospel which the angel, flying in the midst of heaven, has to preach unto men. It is a cloud-scattering, a light-giving, a heart-uplifting voice wherever it is heard. No man, who has looked into his own soul and the true nature of things, ever refused to hear that voice. The "atonement," "cross," "vicarious sacrifice," at which men have stumbled, is some intellectual theory of the great ransom which men have thought out. When the ransom itself, in all its divine beauty and wonderfulness, bursts on our sight we do not reject it; we lay hold of it, we clasp it with frantic joy to our hearts. Acute thinkers have tried to formulate the truth, and other acute thinkers have rebelled against the formulas, and in the heat of debate some have been carried on until they could see in the precious truth itself no beauty. Oh, how differently it looked to them, how full of a glorious and divine power to comfort and heal them, when it came to them in the simplicity and freshness of the Bible! It was to them as the rose and the lily, as the dew that descended on Hermon and on Mount Zion. There is nothing which men are naturally quicker to believe in than the atoning work of Christ. When they first hear it from the lips of Christian missionaries, it is altogether new and mysterious to them, yet they listen to it, to the story of the cross, with an eager joy. "Where did you find out this?" they ask. They naturally

feel that no man could have taught it. "We found it in this volume, which is God's book," is the only answer that can meet their earnest questioning. If we must have human theories of this work of salvation from sin, let them stay where they may perhaps do some good, — round about the sacred truth which error is assailing. But to a world lying in wickedness, to human hearts conscious of their guilt, carry the story of the cross in the simple words in which the apostles tell it, and no one can withstand its power. It is just that which every soul that knows itself is yearning for. It is manna to the hungry, and to the weary it is rest. It is the old story which our blessed Lord himself so often told to wondering listeners; which bowed the hearts of the multitude on the day of Pentecost; which has gone through the world making the solitary place glad, and causing the desert to blossom as the rose.

We know, dear friend, that we have broken the law of righteousness, on which the moral order of the world depends. We are suffering the penalties of that broken law in our own consciences, and we see not how we can ever cease thus to suffer. That which puts an end to remorse must put an end to the remembrance of sin. Who can save us from the consequences of what we have done? Who can so completely draw us into a new life in him as to make us forget how we have lived in the

past? No man has yet been found who was able to answer these questions. It can be none other than God's book in which we read how sinful men may be forgiven, saved, cleansed, restored to the divine order which now wars against them. One who is without sin, who is the Son of God and in perfect accord with him, is born into our sinful humanity. He belongs to no race, no family, no age. He is the elder brother of you, of me, of every soul that has been, or that shall be, born into the world. He is the Son of man at the same time that he is the Son of God. He comes to us and beseeches us to let him act in our behalf. "I will be your representative; I will take your place and act for you," he says, "with respect to that moral order which you have violated." Yes, dear friend, Jesus Christ stands between us and our fears; he meets the retribution which is marching down against us, and all its force is absorbed in him, while we make him our substitute by our own act of faith in his name. He walks with us in the flames, and we are not scorched. He stands between us and righteousness; between us and judgment; between us and death. The fierce wrath and fury of all these rush against him, but they can go no farther. They are so absorbed, satisfied, and done away in him that they cannot get to us. "Look," says our Bible; "see the stormy surges beating against this rock only to

be conquered. How they are hurled back from it ! They lie stunned and ashamed at its base. They cannot shake it or move it out of its place, for it is the Rock of Ages, and in it there is a hiding-place for every soul that has sinned." The wrath of that moral order which is coming out against us fully exhausts itself, comes to an end, is as though it had never been, in Him who humbled himself to the death of the cross. We are by our faith crucified with him, and with him we through that same faith live and reign. For we are in him, and he is in us ; and the law of righteousness being forever fulfilled in him, there is no more condemnation, — no more guilty conscience to them that are in Christ Jesus, but peace with ourselves and with God. The enmity is slain by the cross. We see that hovering along the front of the black armies of retribution. Those armies, so eager to overwhelm us, are themselves overwhelmed, when they come up to that sacred symbol. They sink down out of sight, and we see them no more. So long as the cross does not forsake us, we are safe even against our own sins. This is what we read in our Bibles about escaping the dread consequences of sin. No man ever told us any such thing.

Men cannot intellectually grasp the truth of salvation by the cross. They fret at it in their cold, intellectual moods, and reject it, or try to

explain it away. But when conscience is lashing them with her fiery scourge they flee unto it. They do not ask to understand it. They know that it is God's gift, and they hide themselves under its shadow, praising and blessing his name that it is possible for him in his own way to save the soul which has sinned. We look all through the Bible, we are convinced by the many proofs that God gave it to us, but we keep asking, "Why did he give it? What is there in it worthy of his mighty interposition?" At length we come upon the story of redemption. Here is the thing which we most sorely need. In many and wonderful ways the Bible tells us, over and over again, how sin and its consequences may be destroyed. This becomes the high and holy and living God. This makes it wise and right in him to give us the book we have. This completes the circle of evidences; this seals the testimony that the Bible is God's message to his sinning children, which he has sent to show them how they may be restored to harmony with him, and with the moral order he has established.

Christ can thus undertake for us, since the Bible shows him to be just such a Saviour as the exigency calls for. He is equal to the work of saving a lost race; for he is in perfect sympathy with God and the eternal laws of righteousness. He made all things, and he upholds them by the

word of his power. Who more than he is pledged to the highest good of the universe, is resolved that his universe shall forever receive no harm? If he were but a man or an archangel, we might fear to have such vast interests confided to him. But he is "God manifest in the flesh," and therefore we may trust him to the uttermost.

The emergency is a great one; and at this point, as at all others, the Bible meets our inquiries in a way which is wholly wonderful and divine. Not only has Christ, as it teaches, suffered the vengeance of the broken law in his own person, not only is he one in whose keeping the universe can never receive any harm, but he can restore those who have sinned to himself, to the Father, to the moral order of the world. This he does through their faith in him. The faith which we are to have joins us to him as the branch is joined to the vine, as the members are in the body. We lack spiritual life, in which alone there is power to live as God lives. This want of spiritual life in us Christ supplies by our union to him. The life of the vine goes out into the branches. Being grafted into the good olive-tree we partake of its fatness. Christ does not stop with taking our sins upon himself, he subdues within us the proclivity to sin. He washes us, he cleanses us, he renews us, he makes us like himself by the presence of his spirit within us. This is so true that St. Paul's



inference is, "If we have not his spirit we are none of his." The tree will be known by its fruits. It is only those who accept him as their Saviour whose sins he atones for. All who truly do this are so joined to him as to be one spirit with him; the divine life in him enters into them, and that life bears everywhere the same fruits, — not one thing in him and something else in his followers, but in them as in him: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, truth. These are the fruits of the spirit; and where these are in us and abound they bring us into harmony with God and with the eternal order of things. They restore us to the paths of righteousness, however we may have sinned in the past. They make our lives a part of the universal anthem of love in which all discordant notes shall one day be drowned.

Such is the salvation, told in these few and inadequate words, which the Bible reveals. But when we know how adequate to our case the salvation itself is, what more need of witness is there that it comes from God? The Bible would not be God's book to us if this were not in it; and if this were its only witness it would be enough. Seeing the rosy dawn which rises upon us after our long night, we cannot doubt that it comes from the sun. Stooping down and drinking of the river of water of life, we cannot doubt that

it flows out from under the throne of God and the Lamb. These words are too searching, too sweet and comforting, too uplifting, too saving and refreshing to be spoken by any but the Father of infinite love, who knows us altogether.

Dear friend, are you sailing upon a dark and troubled sea of fears, of doubts, of baffled endeavors to find the right path? Oh, look unto this great light, which is the true light of the world! Let it not be in vain that the Father of mercies has had compassion on you. Sail into the light until the light shall enter into you and dwell there. If Christ had not come and spoken unto you, you had not sinned; but now there is no cloak for your sin. "If the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him?" Go to the lowly stone, in the shadow of Cambridge University, which covers the mortal remains of Henry Kirke White. Kneel beside that stone, and while rubbing the mould from its lettering, and thinking on his marvellous career, make his tribute to the Star which stood over Bethlehem yours:—

"When marshalled on the nightly plain,  
The glittering host bestud the sky,

One star alone, of all the train,  
Can fix the sinner's wandering eye.  
Hark ! hark ! to God the chorus breaks,  
From every host, from every gem ;  
But one alone the Saviour speaks, —  
It is the Star of Bethlehem.

“Once on the raging seas I rode.  
The storm was loud, the night was dark,  
The ocean yawned, and fiercely blowed  
The wind that tossed my foundering bark.  
Deep horror then my vitals froze ;  
Death-struck, I ceased the tide to stem ;  
When suddenly a star arose, —  
It was the Star of Bethlehem.

“It was my guide, my light, my all ;  
It bade my dark foreboding cease,  
And through the storm and danger's thrall  
It led me to the port of peace.  
Now safely moored, my perils o'er,  
I'll sing, first in night's diadem,  
Forever and forevermore,  
The Star, the Star of Bethlehem.”

## CHAPTER XII.

### WHY SOME MEN DOUBT THE BIBLE.

YOU will naturally expect me, in this closing chapter, to say something of that disbelief of the Bible which often breaks forth in the world and abounds. What is the origin of that disbelief, and how may it be prevented or cured? The arguments which prove that the Bible is God's book are so many and so accessible that we wonder why there should be any skeptics. It relieves the question somewhat to know that there is no truth which somebody has not doubted, still we ask how it can be accounted for. We give a reason for the faith in us; what cause do we assign for the disbelief or the unbelief in others?

This unbelief is not always assignable to the same cause, as we trace it. There are idiosyncrasies in men; they look at the Bible from different points of view; something peculiar in the training or surroundings or experience of the doubter has led him into his doubt. To take up all these cases and account for them, one by one, would be an endless task. I can give only certain quite general causes, which, I think, can be shown to be in some way at the bottom of nearly all

doubt as to the divine origin and binding authority of the Bible.

It seems to me that the most general cause of unbelief is a worldly spirit. Men are not deeply and sincerely interested in divine things. They may be interested in them as theories, as curious and subtle speculations, but they are not interested in them as facts. Those eternal things which relate to the soul are to them remote, vague, unreal. Temporal things are right about them, and pressing upon them, and they have fallen into the habit of giving these almost their undivided thoughts.

Now you know that what we give our undivided attention to tends to educate us into sympathy with itself. If there be in us powers which have no affinity for it, these it leaves unnourished till they are dwarfed into useless rudimentary appendages; but such powers in us as have an affinity for it, it develops till they become overshadowing, and absorb the whole strength and vitality of our nature.

There are two doors in each one of us, — a door by which we may go out into eternity and its great truths, and a door by which we may enter into the near and palpable interests of the worldly life. This latter door is always wide open, and the other is too apt to be altogether closed up. God is a spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit. The

book he has given us speaks of spiritual things, nor can we receive it save in the exercise of our spiritual faculties. What wonder, then, if we doubt it, if we even reject it, when the spirit in us has become dormant, inactive, through our devotion to the world? How can we believe in that to which we have become dead? The chief of the tropical island doubted that there was such a thing as ice, — water become solid, — for he had never seen anything of the sort. However much we may have heard of a remote city or country, until our own eyes have seen it, we are not as sure of its existence as we should like to be.

But what if we are without eyes? without any of those perceptions by which we may verify facts reported to us? It is not at all wonderful, if, in such a case, we refuse to believe; and such is the case, in one form or another, of those in whom the claim of the Bible to be God's book awakens doubt. Christ said of those who would not believe in his divine mission, "This people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed." Such is the sad calamity which has overtaken those who doubt the Bible: having eyes they see not, and having ears they hear not, neither do they understand. They have lost the use of those divine faculties by which alone the Bible may be seen to be the word of God. The blind man has no correct knowledge

of colors, nor can you give him any. Perhaps he once saw, but his power of vision was marred and has fallen into decay. To him there is but one color, — his monotonous darkness, which is the absence of all colors. He hears his friends speak of the bright and many-tinted face of nature, and he tries to imagine what they mean. Having the use of his hearing, he perhaps likens colors to sounds, — says that the red rose is like a bugle note, the golden sunset like an organ's tones. We who see him, and who love him, pity his misfortune. He misjudges concerning colors, and even doubts that there are any. But his doubt proves nothing against them; it only shows that he has lost the power of discerning color. Let his sight be restored to him, and he will believe, as much as we, in the varied beauty and glory of God's works. He knows his defect, and readily yields his doubt to those who can see.

Now you and I, my dear friend, should, in judging the Bible, learn to take our defect into account. Are there things in it which we cannot comprehend, which seem absurd to us, which we feel a strong impulse to pronounce untrue? Let not the blind man say, "I see." You know something of God, but not the whole. The relation of your finiteness to his infinity is such that you should expect him to say things which puzzle you. If the compass does not seem to you to point the

way it should, your wisdom still is in believing it right and yourself wrong. You had better believe that the sun does rise in the east, even when you think it rises in the west, if you would find your way out of the woods. It is you, not nature, that has been turned round; you, not what comes from God, that is at fault. Wait till you are sure that the faculties in you, by which the Bible is to be judged, are perfect, before you begin to doubt. How many blessed souls there have been, along in history, who clung to their beliefs till they outgrew their doubts! They were wise enough to charge it to the deficiency in themselves, when they saw men as trees walking; and they clung to their beliefs till they outgrew their doubts, till they saw spiritual things plainly. Remember, dear friend, that our doubt of the Bible grows out of our defect; we doubt because our spiritual vision is diseased. When the eye of our soul is in perfect health, we shall believe with all the heart. Devotion to the things of which time and sense speak has made men unable to know the things of which the Bible speaks. Wait till your spiritual deafness is cured, and then say whether or not the voice of the Bible is God's voice.

Worldliness, in which I claim that doubt of the Bible begins, has many forms. Nor is that form of it which we are wont to consider grossest always most damaging to the spiritual faculty in



us. You look on the brutal slave of his own appetites and passions, and you say, "No wonder that he cannot believe the high and pure teachings of God's word." He is sunk into a stupid heap of animalism. He has in him nothing with which to perceive what is divine. Some life like that of God must be first kindled in him, and he must be lifted into some sort of sympathy with God, or he cannot discern what God has said. You look on the savage running wild in the woods, and you say, "His soul is dwarfed, withered, dead; he has no faculty by which to see that God's message is from God." His debasing habits have lowered him so near the level of the brute which he hunts that he cannot tell God's voice from the voice of a man.

But, perhaps, you look on one who is not savage, who is not brutal or corrupt in life; on the man whose life is, in the language of the market, honest and true, but who is wholly absorbed by his own secular affairs. You do not wonder if you find him smiling, and waving aside the whole solemn concern, when you try a little to bring the truths of the Bible to his notice. Why should he not do this? What chance to grow has the appetency for spiritual things in him ever had? Look at his whole life; — it has been given to material pursuits. All that in him which has to do with worldliness, with earthly concerns, has been pro-

digiously developed. It has towered up and spread abroad, and overshadowed everything spiritual in him. His spiritual powers have been asleep, have grown weak and puny all the while. He has lost all connection with unseen things; no voice out of eternity can make itself heard in his dull ear. What wonder, then, when the Bible comes to him, if he has no welcome for it? if he even doubts whether there be any God to give such a book, or any such hereafter, or obligations of religion and morality, as it speaks of. His doubting of the Bible is no mystery to you, for he lacks the faculty with which to believe it.

But I turn from these instances to that which has, perhaps, more than anything else to do with present doubts concerning the Bible. Is it any wonder, I ask, that the man whose life is devoted to material science, and who forgets to keep himself all the time in full sympathy with God, sinks at length into such lack of true spiritual life as to be no longer able to believe that the Bible is God's book? His whole energy and enthusiasm are turned to the investigation of matter. His sense perceptions, his powers of critically observing what is visible and tangible, are remarkably developed. Losing his interest in everything but his chosen studies, what wonder that his faculty for knowing religious truth becomes dwarfed, torpid, useless, — like the eyes of fishes in caves

or the wings of birds that never fly? Such an one may be a master in material science, but spiritual things have grown unreal to him. Of course the messages of the Bible find no response or welcome in his soul; he applies to it his materialistic tests; it is to him a book of fables and dreams, for it comes out of a world of which he has lost all knowledge. Men of this stamp reject the Bible as naturally as a blind man does our theories of color.

And when the learned skeptic scatters his doubts far and wide through books, papers, and magazines, what wonder that they are at once welcomed by thousands who, like him, though in various ways, are devoted to material pursuits? Thus do I account for the fact that not only some students of nature, but the masses for whom they write and lecture, are sometimes unable to receive the Bible as a record of religious truth sent to them from God. It is not at all surprising that they reject it; and what they do, so far from proving that the Bible is untrue, only shows how sadly they have been maimed and blinded in soul,—their love of material things wholly absorbing them, and the power to see eternal things dormant or dead in them. The natural man perceives not the things which are of God, for he has not in full exercise the faculties by which alone they can be discerned.

Such being the origin of men's doubts as to the truth of the Bible, the way of removing their doubts is at once suggested: they do not need to be argued with so much as quickened in soul. While there is this lack of spiritual life in unbelievers, arguments addressed to their reason or understanding will hardly persuade them to put away their doubts. The arguments which I have tried to bring in the foregoing chapters have been not so much for them as for those who have some spiritual life, — for persons yet young in their Christian discipleship, or just quickened to religious inquiry by the Holy Spirit, who are more or less troubled and confused by doubts concerning the Bible, with which the air about them is at times filled.

I have small hope that anything I can say on the evidences will be of much use to the devoted materialist and the thorough-going worldling, who have rejected the Bible. Nor do I believe that any human arguments can remove their scepticism. It is sometimes said, you know, that Christians themselves may, by living faithful lives, apply the best cure to unbelief. The best possible for man to apply, I grant, but still ineffectual. The Christian is the world's Bible; but the world often doubts him quite as much as the written volume. You know that the worst men, and hardest doubters, may live all their lives in imme-

diate contact with the best and holiest men. Where goodness does not attract it repels. How quick the bad are to see the defects in the good, and to be influenced by those defects; just as they love to dwell on that in the Bible which puzzles them, and to make it a reason for rejecting the book. The fault is not in the Bible, nor in our arguments, nor in the lives of Christians, but in those who doubt. They have lost all true and simple love—their first love—for religious truth. Their whole mind and energy are absorbed by material and temporal things; their spiritual perceptions have grown weak by disease. The remedy must reach the disease. Spiritual health, such as men begin to get when they are born again of the Spirit of God, is their first great need.

Nothing will ever induce men to receive the Bible, and to love and obey its precepts, while this inward quickening is wanting. They will doubt, just because it has grown to be natural with them to doubt what is unseen and divine. Though nothing can be more true than that the Bible is God's book, and reveals him to men, they will doubt it, just as the blind doubt that there are colors, or the deaf that there are sounds. Though the Bible should be shown to be as true as the axioms of mathematics, they will still doubt, as some doubt those axioms. They will not be per-

suaded though one should rise from the dead. You may show that they need a revelation; that God desires to give them one, and has full power to give it; that the Bible claims to be his, and is such a message as we should expect from him; that contemporary history and the fulfilment of prophecy, and what the Bible has done in the world, make good its claims,—all this and much more you may show; but what is it to those who, having eyes, see not, and having ears, hear not, and who do not understand? The argument which they need must begin within them, in the quickening of their spiritual perceptions, in their dying to the world and being made alive to God.

The question is sometimes raised, whether the more conspicuous of those who doubt the Bible are of a higher order of mind than those who believe it. I do not think they are higher or as high. The imperial minds of our race who have known the Bible—the Leibnizes, the Pascals, the Shakespeares, the Bacons, the Edwardses, and Websters—have been implicit believers in its divine authority.

But it is not necessary to disparage the unbelievers. They may have the very highest intellectual gifts, yet, being wholly given up to material things, or studying religion mainly as a mere theory, they are more powerless than the unwise and unlearned to receive the Bible as God's word

to his own children about eternal things. Their prodigious growth in philosophy, in criticism, in curious speculation, has only the more effectually killed in them those childlike soul-perceptions by which God and his word may be truly known. If you go far back in history, and walk down between the two ranks, the doubters on the one hand, and the believers on the other, you may accord equal natural powers to them all; those in one of the ranks doubt because only that side of them which is toward this world has been developed, those in the other line believe because the faculties in them which are fitted to lay hold of God and his truth are healthy and full-grown.

You go to such men as Pascal or Edwards, and you cannot possibly make them doubt that the Bible is God's book; they know it is from the way in which it speaks of God and his kingdom. There have been millions, — the loftiest men and the humblest, the greatest and the least, — who, by faith, dwelt in that kingdom. They walked with God, and their conversation was in heaven. To them nothing else could be so true as the Bible, since it gave a ground for their own experience, it spoke back to them what they were deeply conscious of. They had seen the King in his beauty, the land that is very far off; and the book which came to them out of that land, with the King's seal upon it, was no fable, no dream, but the yea and

amen to what they had most deeply known and felt in their souls. The eagerness with which such men have received the Bible, and laid it away in their hearts, and gloried in it as the truth of truths, will be shared by you and me, dear friend, as those faculties in us by which we apprehend religious truth come out from their bondage to things seen, and are renewed and made to grow up towards a perfect man in Christ Jesus. When we are dead to the world, and alive to God, we shall see that the Bible is wholly and divinely true.

This quickening and renewal, this regeneration, this unfolding of your spiritual faculties into the full likeness of God, is what I first and most desire for you, dear friend. There are some, yea, I trust, many, things in the Bible which you can already see to be wondrously true. Let this be a sign to you that your spiritual perceptions, however neglected or abused, are not yet wholly dead. Though they seem to you at times to live a feeble and flickering life, Christ has come that you might have life more abundantly. Quench not the Spirit, and then you will not despise prophesyings. It is necessary, in order that you may find God and eternal life in the Bible, that you should be born again, — not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. If you grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, who



comes to work this glorious work in you, he will seal you unto the day of redemption, and will open to you the divine meaning of Scripture. You shall have the mind of Christ. You shall receive that spirit by which all things, even the deep things of God, are perceived.

But not all at once shall the glory burst on you out of the divine book. First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear, — a gradual process of knowing, answering to the process of renewal going on within you. You find a little spot cleared for you in the vast forest of doubt; there pitch your tent. Do not stray away into the surrounding woods, and lose yourself in their tangled depths, but enlarge the bounds of your clearing. Try to know what is mysterious in God's word only as you are sure that you study it for duty's sake, and with the light of his countenance falling around you. Your first wisdom consists in reducing to practice what you already know, and your next wisdom in seeking to know more only that you may improve your practice. They shall learn of Christ who follow him. Those who do his will shall know of the doctrine. You already see something, though but darkly, as in a glass; yet, if you are true to that present light, the day is coming when you shall see face to face. Though from him that hath not shall be taken away what he hath, to him that hath shall

be given, and he shall have abundance. If you are false to so much of the Bible as you can now believe, you will at length doubt the whole ; but if you are true to it, the whole of the blessed volume shall be made clear as the noonday to you. You may not understand it while in the flesh, but in the brighter day which is coming, the Lamb in the midst of the throne shall take it, and shall unloose to you its seals. Turn away from the light which you now see in God's word, and there will be left in it but the blackness of darkness for you ; follow that light and it shall lead you forth into a boundless and resplendent day.

Not outwardly, along the thorny paths of human speculation, but within you, in the cry of your spirit and God's answer thereto, must you search for the well of water which springs up into everlasting life : —

“ Came North and South and East and West,  
Four sages, to a mountain crest,  
Each pledged to search the wide world round  
Until the wondrous well be found.

“ Before a crag they made their seat,  
Pure bubbling waters at their feet.  
Said one, This well is small and mean,  
Too petty for a village green!  
Another said, So small and dumb.  
From earth's deep centre can it come ?  
The third, This water seems not rare,  
Not even bright, but pale as air!

The fourth, Thick crowds I looked to see;  
Where the true well is these must be.

“ They rose and left the mountain crest, —  
One North, one South, one East, one West;  
O'er many seas and deserts wide  
They wandered, thirsting, till they died.

“ The simple shepherds by the mountain dwell,  
And dip their pitchers in the wondrous well.”















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